AGRI PROBE

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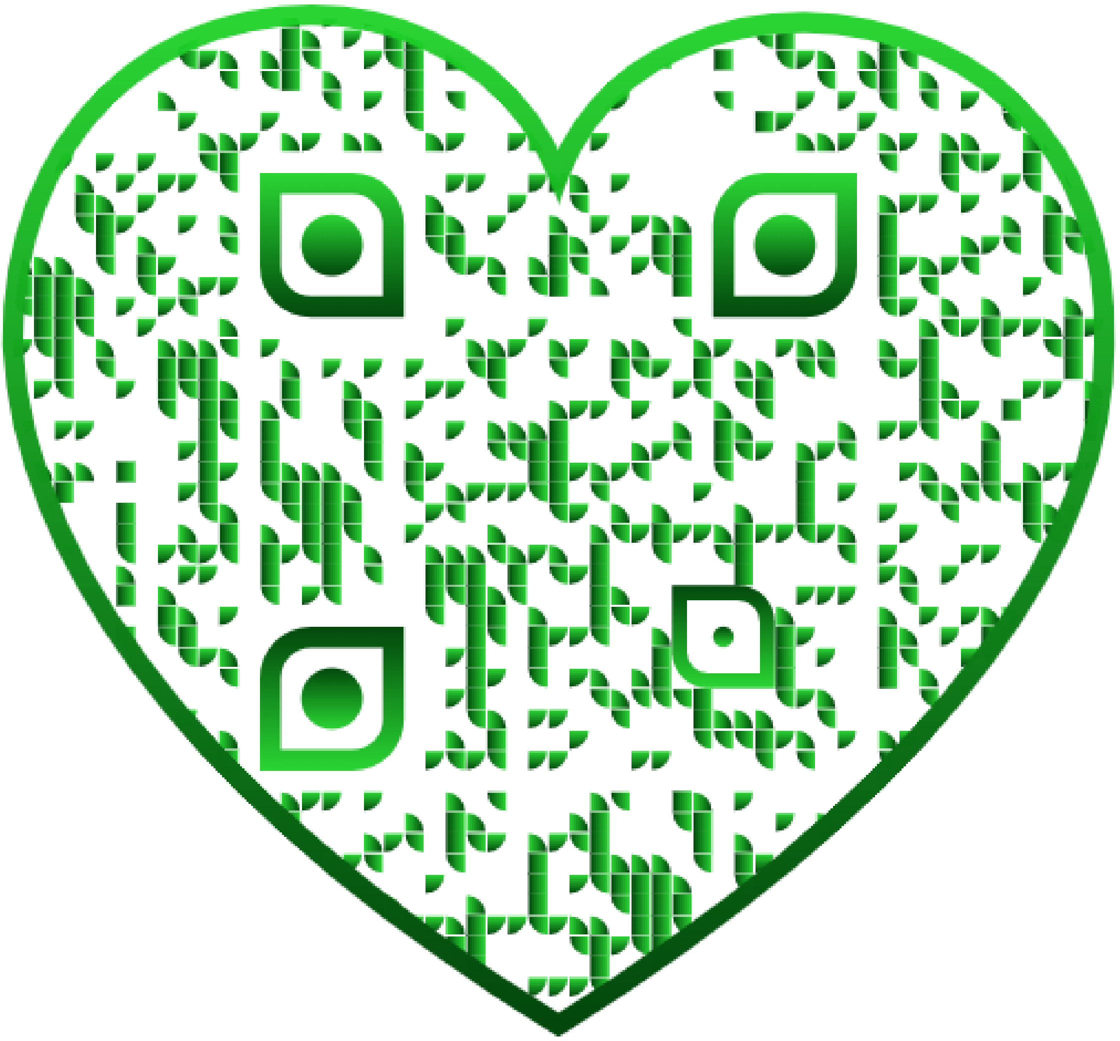
From Elsenburg College to award-winning winemakers

2025: A defining year for Growth for Jobs

Western Cape to host MCAP Leadership Council meeting in 2025

Breaking Animal Disease Boundaries

Research and news magazine of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture



DIS DIE EEN

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RSG Landbou word elke **Vrydagoggend om 5:25 vm.** en **Saterdae om 11:45 vm.** uitgesaai.

Tydens ons programme maak ons kennis met innoveerders, boere-planmakers, asook diegene aan die voorpunt van landbou-tegnologie en navorsing. Maak gerus kontak en laat jou stem gehoor word. Ek nooi jou graag uit om stories van hoop en inspirasie met my te deel. Stuur gerus wenke en idees na **Eloise Pretorius** | ✉ eloise.pretorius@westerncape.gov.za

"Sien" jou binnekort
op die radio!
Eloise Pretorius

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Setting the SCENE

by Riaan Nowers

Agriculture: The Ultimate Team Sport

Sport in agriculture!? Well, it is undeniably true that agriculture is a “contact sport”. Just like any successful sporting code, the agricultural sector needs to prepare itself during the off-season to invigorate itself with energy and passion to be able to ignite themselves for the real season. The *AgriProbe* team believes our valued agriculturalists did enjoy a well-deserved “off-season” with their loved ones and if fortunate, perhaps visited places or family that are of special value to them.

Like in any sport, hard work, good relationships and future thinking are but some of the elements that make a team successful. In this edition, you will read all about the work that went into building relationships with some external players to strengthen our agricultural game. There is a wonderful article on opportunities for our youth to tap into work opportunities in the USA. Also, partnerships with contacts in agribusinesses demonstrate how investments can be made into agriculture by forging strong relationships to the benefit of our department and its clients.

This edition also shares with its readers some of the innovative work our officials are doing. Several articles touch on the impact of climate change on a wide array of “players” preparing them for the work ahead. The inclusion of our youth is a clever investment in sustaining institutional capacities for the future.

Talking about the future, the readers will also be made aware that the Western Cape will host the Mediterranean Climate Action Partnership (MCAP) Annual Convening and Leadership Council meeting this year, which is of strategic importance not only to our province but also to agriculture nationally. Our province’s drive to become a low-carbon and climate-resilient province will undoubtably benefit from these interactions.

> “ ***May our beloved agricultural teams experience great movements on their sporting fields.*** ”

With the kick-off of the 2025/26 season or financial year, it is hoped that our players will showcase their talents in the agricultural arena and share their experiences with those watching us doing exceptional things on the agricultural sporting field.

May our beloved agricultural teams experience great movements on their sporting fields and encourage our spectators to believe in us and to be proud of what we will achieve this coming year!

#ForTheLoveOfAgriculture AP

Riaan Nowers

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COVER INSPIRATION

The Western Cape's thriving tourism and trade sectors underscore the power of long-term investment. Strategic air access, destination marketing, and management have driven record-breaking arrivals, fueling job creation at a pace surpassing the broader economy. Years of effort to attract international visitors continue to yield strong results.

In May 2025, Cape Town will host the second MCAP Leadership Council, a landmark event advancing climate resilience, showcasing local successes, and strengthening global collaboration among Mediterranean-climate regions.

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Read all about it on page 20.

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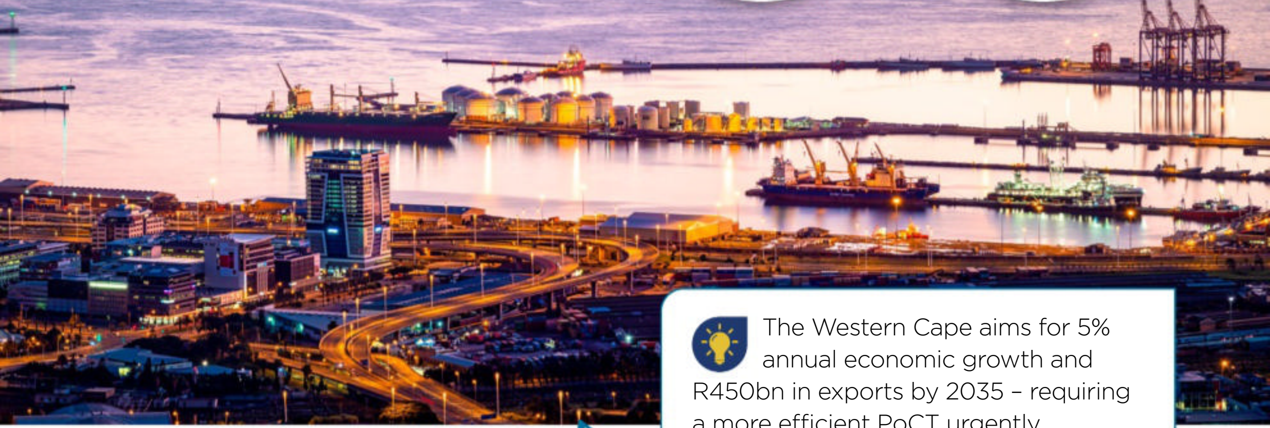
2025: A defining year for Growth for Jobs

From the desk of the Western Cape Minister of Agriculture, Economic Development and Tourism, Dr Ivan Meyer (left). Compiled by Daniel Johnson.



Port of Cape Town.
Photo © Jean van der Meulen

The Western Cape aims for 5% annual economic growth and R450bn in exports by 2035 – requiring a more efficient PoCT urgently.

As we step into 2025, policymakers at every level, face a defining question: Are we doing enough to unlock faster economic growth, create sustainable jobs and improve the quality of life for our citizens?

This question is more urgent than ever in an increasingly uncertain global landscape.

The Western Cape has stood out in South Africa, proving that focused policy can yield results. The Western Cape province grew employment by 26.1% since the initial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. During the same period, South Africa grew employment by 19.8%. Further, at 22.2% unemployment in the Western Cape remains the lowest in the country, although it is still high by international standards. Nonetheless, the province's above-national performance is a testament to the region's resilience amid challenges. This serves as motivation to drive us to achieve more for our people and our economy.

A vision for 2035: Prosperity for all

To ensure economic growth outpaces population growth within the Western Cape, ambitious goals have been set under its "Growth for Jobs" plan, which the Provincial Strategic Plan guides. By 2035, the province aims to achieve a R1 trillion economy, triple its exports and foster innovation by increasing research and development investment by 300%.

Central to this strategy is attracting private-sector investment equal to 20% of regional GDP, or R200 billion and boosting venture capital deals to R20 billion.

Milnerton lighthouse.
Photo © Jean van der Meulen

Milnerton lighthouse, a 21m beacon since 1960, guides ships through Table Bay's hazardous waters toward the Port of Cape Town.

Tackling systemic barriers synergistically with national government

Much of South Africa's key economic levers, such as logistics and telecommunications connectivity, are held within a national mandate. As such, the national government plays a critical role in addressing systemic regulatory and institutional issues that constrain investment and expansion. However, as the province and municipalities operate much closer to the ground and are more in tune with the needs of businesses, the provincial government has a definitive role in addressing challenges. This may be through supporting and collaborating with the national government or the direct development of unique solutions to challenges by the Western Cape Government. We can indeed be more nimble, creative and nuanced in addressing specific issues facing our businesses.

Logistics remains a pressing issue for agricultural and downstream manufacturing sectors. With 39% of the Western Cape's agricultural value reliant on exports, efficient logistic networks are crucial. Transnet's turnaround plan has started to yield positive results, and the province is committed to working with Transnet to address their immediate efficiency challenges and collaborate so that the ports of the Western Cape are fit for export growth in the future.

Within the context of the Government of National Unity (GNU), and with the different spheres of government working together, we will realise some tremendous growth opportunities quicker and better.

The province and its municipalities can also make significant contributions by ensuring that necessary bulk infrastructure services and road networks feeding into the ports are available. They must also ensure that rail networks are accessible to support the ports.

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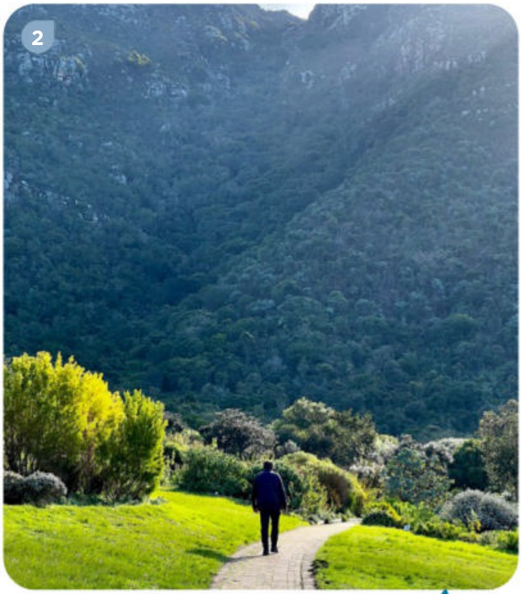
Cape Point The Flying Dutchman Funicular.
Photo © Mike Peel



Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens.
Photo © MLP Media

Robben Island Museum.
Photo © South African Tourism.

Table Mountain Aerial Cableway.
Photo © Jean van der Meulen

Tourism and trade: Building momentum

The Western Cape's success in tourism and trade highlights the power of long-term investment. Enhanced air access and destination marketing and management have brought a bumper year of arrivals, supporting job growth at a faster rate than the broader economy.

Consistent efforts to boost international arrivals to the region from even further back have shown significant results in other metrics.

For example, StatsSA's *International Tourism Publication* shows us that from 2014 to 2023, the average annual growth rate of foreign visitors arriving at Cape Town International Airport was 30.1%. This is more than 2.5 times the average rate for arrivals at the country's other six international airports, which stood at 11.9%.

V&A Waterfront.
Photo © Jean van der Meulen

Did you know?
The Big 6 attractions in Cape Town is made up of Cape Point The Flying Dutchman Funicular, Kirstenbosch, Robben Island Museum, Table Mountain Aerial Cableway, the V&A Waterfront and Groot Constantia. These six spectacular Cape Town attractions are the city's backbone.

PARIS
9 294 KM
BERLIN
9 575 KM
JERUSALEM
7 468 KM
NEW YORK
12 541 KM

Photo © Jean van der Meulen

> **“Every single person with whom a tourist interacts in the Western Cape is a tourism ambassador.”**

Over the same period, Cape Town International Airport accounted for an average of 35% of all international travellers to South Africa’s six international airports.

Additionally, by 2023, the number of international visitors arriving in the province had surpassed pre-Covid-19 levels.

With this additional tourist demand, we need to expand our tourism infrastructure and product offerings as a tourism destination to capitalise on growing international interest and ensure sustainable economic benefits. However, it is not just the province that is responsible for ensuring our tourism industry grows. Every single person with whom a tourist interacts in the Western Cape is a tourism ambassador. We must ensure we showcase the legendary Cape warmth and generosity.

»

Groot Constantia.
Photo © Abraham Badenhorst

Groot Constantia vineyards.
Photo © Michael Fu

Groot Constantia, South Africa's oldest wine farm, has produced legendary wines since 1685. This World Wine Heritage site offers a rich cultural, historical, and sensory experience, showcasing the country's heritage through world-class wines and tourism.

Learn more! Scan the QR code or visit shorturl.at/Ec1IT

Photo © Abraham Badenhorst

A citizen-centric approach

At its core, the **Growth for Jobs** plan is about improving the lives of citizens. By fostering cohesive communities, empowering youth and creating safer environments, the province seeks to ensure that economic growth translates into real opportunities for all. The plan is not just about numbers – it's about dignity, hope and the promise of a brighter future.

In this, we have identified pathways to help our youth access economic opportunities through career preparation and guidance, entrepreneurship awareness and skills development opportunities.

Learn more! Download the **Growth for Jobs Strategy!**.

City of Cape Town.
Photo © Jean van der Meulen

Did you know?

Cape Town tops *Time Out's* "Best Cities in the World" 2025 list, celebrated for its beauty, culture, and vibrant experiences.

Learn more!

Scan the QR code or visit shorturl.at/6DAAx

Seizing the opportunity

As the national economy begins stabilising with the advent of the GNU, 2025 offers a pivotal moment for the Western Cape to accelerate reforms and use its position and influence to support progress in South Africa. The challenges are significant, but so too are the opportunities.

South Africa is hosting the G20 in 2025. We will use every opportunity through economic diplomacy to drive our **Growth for Jobs** strategy. The Western Cape will also host the B20, and we will work with the GNU and Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) to make it a big success for the Western Cape, South Africa and Africa.

The province can turn its ambitious goals into tangible outcomes with continued focus and collaboration across government, business and civil society.

The Western Cape **Growth for Jobs** strategy will see extraordinary delivery in 2025.

Let 2025 be the year we solidify the foundation for a thriving, inclusive and resilient economy that works for everyone. Let's create a provincial economy that achieves breakout economic growth, resulting in sufficient employment and opportunity and an economy that is resilient, diverse and thriving – generating confidence, hope and prosperity for all. *The time to act is now!*

#ForTheLoveOfAgriculture AP

From the Western Cape to the Eternal City

Insights from the 52nd Committee on World Food Security

by Mary James

CFS
CFS 52
COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY
21-25 OCTOBER 2024
50

The global assembly at the opening session of CFS 52.

“All roads lead to Rome,” they say – a sentiment that rang true as I travelled to the 52nd Plenary Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS 52) at FAO headquarters in the heart of Italy.

Held during October 2024, this global event was more than a conference; it was an extraordinary opportunity to represent the Western Cape Department of Agriculture (WCDoA) on a stage dedicated to achieving Zero Hunger by 2030.

Representing the WCDoA, I was honoured to join my colleagues, Jerry Aries and Douglas Chitepo, whose expertise and insights significantly contributed to our department’s representation.

One of the key highlights was our department’s side-event, “*Nourish to Flourish: Strengthening Resilient Food Systems from Community Roots to Global Governance*”. The session, expertly facilitated by Prof. Jane Battersby of the University of Cape Town and a member of IPES-Food, provided a dynamic platform to discuss local and international efforts to strengthen food security.

The Nourish to Flourish team at the CFS 52. From left: Jerry Aries (Acting Chief Director: Agricultural Producers Support and Development), Prof. Joyce Chitja (University of KwaZulu-Natal), Mary James (WCDoA: Head of Communication), Douglas Chitepo (Director: Overberg, Cape Winelands and Metropole Districts) and Prof. Jan Swanepoel (University of the Free State).

Jerry Aries (middle), presenting at the Nourish to Flourish side-event during CFS 52.

Watch this!
Scan the QR code or
visit shorturl.at/hswKH

The event opened with a keynote by Michael Fakhri, UN Special Rapporteur on the **Right to Food**, who aptly stated: "The terrain is shifting fast – global politics, the economy and the urgency to work within food systems in new ways, require building the next generation of scholars and practitioners and redefining the relationship between academia and civil society." His insights set the tone for thought-provoking dialogue that followed..

His words underscored the growing need for innovative, inclusive approaches to food security. This sentiment was echoed throughout the event, particularly in the academic contributions by Prof. Joyce Chitja (University of KwaZulu-Natal) and Prof. Jan Swanepoel (University of the Free State). Their research highlighted the critical role of multi-stakeholder collaboration in developing resilient food systems that can withstand economic and environmental challenges.

A key moment for the WCDoA was Jerry Aries' participation as a panellist, where he presented the department's pioneering initiatives, including the **Nourish to Flourish** programme and the **One-Home-One-Garden** initiative. These efforts are making tangible strides in enhancing food and nutrition security in the Western Cape, ensuring that communities have the resources and support needed to build sustainable local food systems.

During his intervention, Jerry emphasised the importance of "listening to understand", a principle that fosters trust among stakeholders and strengthens local food systems through diverse global partnerships. His message resonated with many in attendance, reinforcing the idea that sustainable change requires not only policies but also meaningful engagement at the grassroots level.

Another significant engagement was attending the High-Level Interactive Studio hosted by the Private Sector Mechanism (PSM). The discussions covered critical issues, such as climate change, biodiversity and the right to food and decent work. The opportunity to engage with leaders from diverse sectors provided insights into how different industries are addressing food security challenges while balancing economic and environmental sustainability.

H.E. Ambassador Nosipho Nausca-Jean Jezile (fourth from right), the Chair of CFS, with the South African representatives at the High-Level Interactive Studio hosted by the Private Sector Mechanism.

»

Mary James (right) meeting with Véronique Montes Baffier (left), Head Librarian, and a fellow librarian at the FAO Library in Rome.

One of my personal highlights of CFS 52 was the opportunity to explore the FAO Library, where I met Head Librarian, Véronique Montes Baffier. Sharing some of WCDoA's flagship publications, including *AgriProbe* magazine, was a moment of pride. This exchange reinforced our commitment to knowledge-sharing and global collaboration, ensuring the Western Cape remains part of the broader dialogue on sustainable agriculture and food security.

An inspiring encounter was meeting H.E. Ambassador Nosipho Nausca-Jean Jezile, the Chair of CFS and South Africa's representative in Italy. Her leadership and vision for a sustainable global food system reinforced the importance of diplomacy, governance and international cooperation in achieving long-term food security solutions.

Terraced citrus and olive groves on the Amalfi Coast – a glimpse into Italy's traditional yet evolving agricultural landscape.

Here, small family-owned farms, emblematic of Italian heritage, dominate over corporate farming. These terraces reflect a blend of age-old practices and modern technology, ensuring sustainability and continuity in this picturesque region.

Acting together
a world free
unger
nutrition
50
YEARS OF
CFS

H.E. Ambassador Nosipho Nausca-Jean Jezile, the Chair of CFS and South Africa's representative in Italy.

Sunrise and cappuccino at Vietri sul Mare, Italy.

The CFS 52 reinforced that no single entity can tackle food insecurity alone – it requires collaboration and communication across governments, research institutions, private sectors and civil society. Also important to note is how we integrate local knowledge with global best practices, ensuring that food security solutions are contextually relevant and sustainable.

The conference also emphasised the urgency of policy coherence, ensuring that agricultural, environmental and economic policies work together rather than in silos.

As the goal of Zero Hunger by 2030 looms nearer, it is important for all of us to move with a deepened sense of purpose and speed – knowing that our work, no matter how localised, plays a vital role in shaping a more sustainable global food security solution.

Until the next CFS, *Ciao Italia*! **AP**

Photo © Anila Amataj

Did you know?

• There was a global prevalence of undernourishment of up to 9.1% translating to between 713 and 757 million people in 2023. This number has persisted at nearly the same level for three consecutive years after having risen sharply in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Nearly 28.9% of the global population – 2.33 billion people – were moderately or severely food insecure in 2023, with low-income countries having the largest percentage of the population that is unable to afford a healthy diet.

Learn more!

CFS52 report:
shorturl.at/5JV0d

• 18% of the Western Cape Province suffers from severe food inaccessibility.

The major food and nutrition insecurity hotspots were identified in three districts of the Western Cape Province, namely:

- West Coast
- Garden Route
- Central Karoo

Nutritional indicators showed key nutrition challenges facing households:

- Malnutrition
- Stunting
- Obesity

Learn more!

shorturl.at/gnHsD

For more information, contact **Mary James**: ✉ mary.james@westerncape.gov.za

Breaking Animal Disease Boundaries

by Dr Michelle Seutloali

The Western Cape Provincial Veterinary Laboratory cordially invites you to
The 2nd Annual Veterinary Diagnostic Services' Scientific Symposium
Theme: "BREAKING Animal Disease Boundaries ... the urgency to transcend"
RSVP: Michelle.Seutloali@westerncape.gov.za
Western Cape Government
Agriculture
Wes-Kaapse Regering

As part of the 2024 provincial veterinary week activities, the Western Cape Provincial Veterinary Laboratory hosted its second annual VDS Scientific Symposium during October 2024 in Saldanha Bay on the West Coast, with the theme "Breaking Animal Disease Boundaries – The urgency to transcend".

The theme aimed to address unfolding issues around changing animal disease behaviours.

Examples of such scenarios include the recent unprecedented cases seen within (e.g. rabies in seals) and near the province (e.g. foot-and-mouth disease in the nearby Eastern Cape province) and the urgency for mindset shifts among all relevant stakeholders and citizens of the province, as both diseases are of zoonotic (the former) and economical trade (the latter) importance.

> **"Cleaning is not just cleaning; there's more to it if proper and effective biosecurity is to be implemented and maintained in a laboratory or any set up for that matter."**

The event was a success and boasted internationally acclaimed guest speakers, such as Prof. Neil Duncan from C4 Africa, who is also a retired poultry specialist from the University of Pretoria, a giant in the field of poultry production and diagnostics. Dr Didi Claassens, a pathologist specialist from Afrivet pharmaceuticals, and Dr Lesley van Helden, the department's very own veterinary epidemiologist, were also among the guest speakers that shared highly informative topics aligned with the OneHealth concept.

Western Cape Department of Agriculture
DOA.Info@westerncape.gov.za | www.westerncape.gov.za

The veterinary services team at the symposium.

The symposium's programme content did not disappoint with thought-provoking presentations and topics. Amongst these was one presentation that was awaited with excitement on the first day of the symposium – a presentation by laboratory cleaners. It was an historic moment. When asked to reflect after their presentation, the laboratory's cleaners, who were initially nervous and frightened of this mammoth challenge and an "out of their comfort zone" moment, all expressed joy, relief and a sense of fulfilment for having made history. They presented their case outstandingly and were impressive while doing so. The topic of their presentation was "The science of cleaning", drawing attention to the fact that cleaning is not just cleaning; there's more to it if proper and effective biosecurity is to be implemented and maintained in a laboratory, or any set up for that matter, where animals are kept and where there's a risk of animal diseases occurring. For the laboratory workspace specifically, the most crucial factor as far as cleaning and biosecurity are concerned, is to ensure animal diseases do not escape the laboratory and potentially infect the environment outside its boundaries.

Brown fur seal (*Arctocephalus pusillus*).
Photo © Hans Hillewaert

Some of the key topics that were presented, discussed and very relevant to the OneHealth concept were on zoonoses (diseases that infect humans); investigations on antimicrobial resistance tendencies in red meat presented by V. Twala from the VITF exports office; and the recently unfolding issues around rabies that was diagnosed in Cape fur seals, unprecedented cases, which was presented by the renowned veterinarian and OneHealth representative Dr Lesley van Helden.

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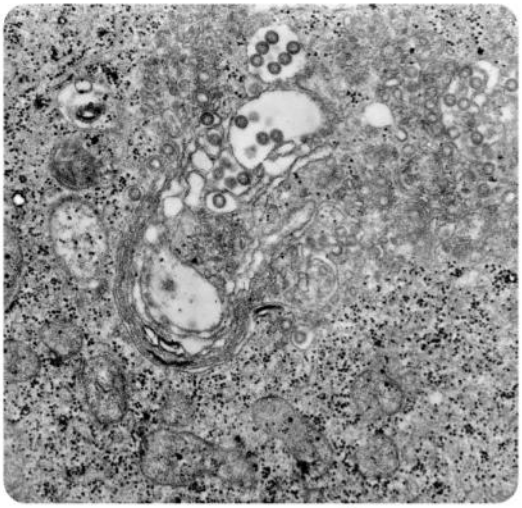
Young alpacas that have been shorn.
Photo © Peter Titmuss



Rift Valley Fever (RVF) tissue.

Rift Valley Fever (RVF) is caused by the RVF virus. It spreads through contact with infected animal blood, inhaling airborne particles from butchering, consuming raw milk from infected animals, or mosquito bites. Livestock such as cows, sheep, goats and camels are primarily affected, with mosquitoes being the main transmission route.

Presentations that spoke a lot to farmers and also to those critical first line of contact officials (field officials), such as animal health technicians (AHTs) and extension officers, were on pig farming (the ins and outs of this type of farming) by guest speaker Dr T. Gous; cachexia (weight loss) in production animals (how to identify it and what to do) by CCS vet Dr Mackenzie; and aquaculture farming and diagnostics (the costs of owning and running an abalone farm, and the animal disease risks associated with it), by Dr Shuiji from Amanzi Laboratories. The presentations on small-scale broiler production (what to do to make it a success) and how to recognise notifiable poultry diseases were done by Prof. N. Duncan.

Of special interest to farmers who are ready to step into the marketplace, was information on laboratory tests needed to export animals/animal products, shared by Dr D. Venter from the VITF exports office. The laboratory's own veterinary technologist and veterinarian, B. Montoedi and Dr T. Anthony, respectively presented remarkably interesting topics on virology and the egg inoculation test method and Rift Valley fever in alpacas.

The symposium was a momentous occasion, and all attendees left the event wiser and brimming with knowledge. AP

For more information, contact **Dr Michelle Seutloali**: ✉ michelle.seutloali@westerncape.gov.za

Third Annual Climate Change and Agriculture Youth Summit

by Prof. Stephanie Midgley

Conference delegates.

The youth that are in training or navigating the early stages of a career in agriculture, will be the professionals and managers in this sector for decades to come. At the same time, climate change is a reality and impacting and changing the agricultural sector in many ways. Are our youth equipped with the knowledge, vision and passion to provide the scientific evidence, climate-smart farming practices and technologies, and resolute leadership that will underpin a future thriving sector?

The Western Cape Department of Agriculture (WCDoA) is committed to empowering the youth of this province by giving them the platform and voice to debate these issues. In addition, they must find inspiration to identify their own role in responding to the climate change crisis.

During October 2024, the WCDoA hosted the third annual Climate Change and Agriculture Youth Summit at Goudini Spa near Rawsonville. A total of 89 youth (ages 18-35 years) participated, most of them from the Cape Winelands District. The event offered many opportunities to network and connect with other young professionals in government and the private sector.

An informative yet fun-filled programme covered a diversity of topics, including how climate change is affecting agriculture and climate-related disasters in the Western Cape; how youth perceive climate change in their own lives and communities; the roles and responsibilities of various actors at local level; perspectives from young climate change champions; and a climate change opportunities "marketplace" where practical information was made available, including education, career and entrepreneurial opportunities.

For more information, contact **Prof. Stephanie Midgley**:
✉ stephanie.midgley@westerncape.gov.za

Presentations on the **incubation** of **ostrich eggs** a hit in **Türkiye**

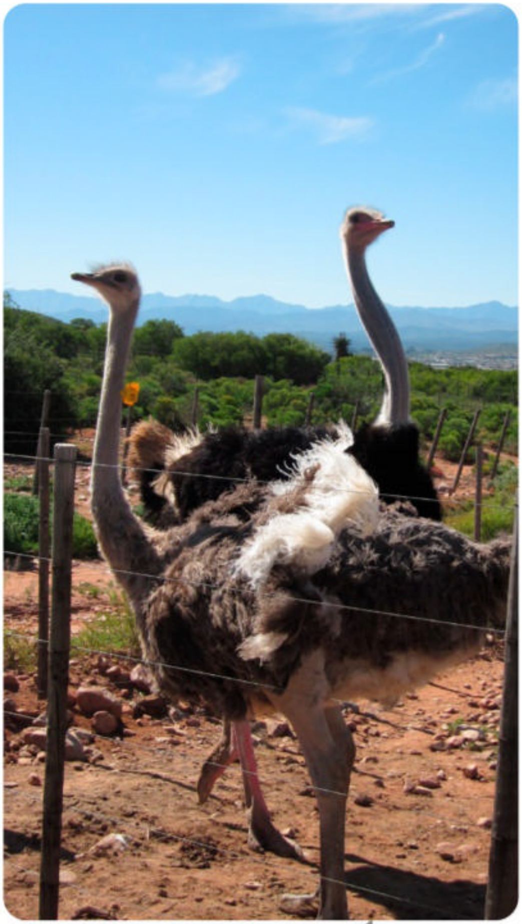
by Dr Zanell Brand

South African ostrich (*Struthio camelus australis*). Photo © Jean van der Meulen

The 49th edition of the Incubation and Fertility Research Group (IFRG) meeting was held in the beautiful city of Antalya, Türkiye, during October 2024. The IFRG provides a share-learning platform and is an excellent opportunity for sciences and industry to connect and exchange.

The more than 80 attendees and 30 presenters included delegates from the UK, West and East Europe, South Africa, as well as Brazil and the USA. A wide range of topics was covered, including SPIDES, influence of incubation temperature on meat quality, egg storage, egg hygiene, as well as the treatment to incubation conditions of several avian species.

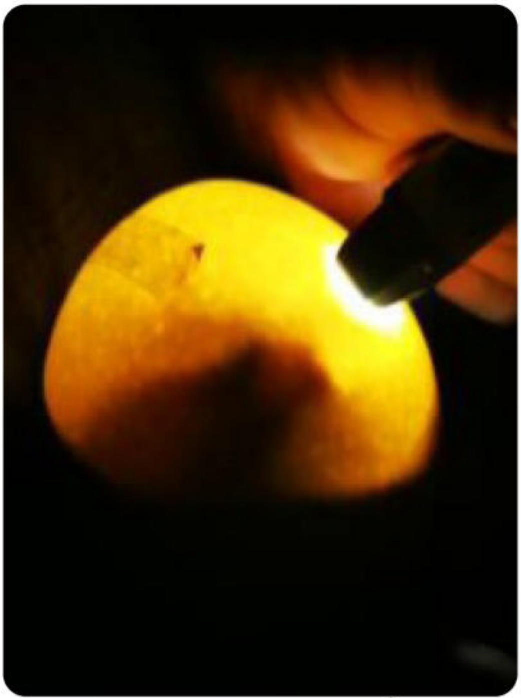
This year was also the start of the IFRG NextGen Funding to give students opportunities and cultivate their future.



Breeding pair. Photo © Z Brand

The programme was divided into seven different sessions:

- Fertility
- Presentations for the Nick French Award
- Egg treatment
- Incubation temperatures
- Incubation outcomes
- Incubation and data analysis
- Management and connecting the dots



Internal pipping. Photo © M Brand

Chick hatching. Photo © Z Brand

Dr Zanell Brand submitted an abstract for an oral presentation titled "Incubator Temperature versus Eggshell Temperature during Artificial Hatching of Ostrich Eggs". The second presentation was by Madeli Brand titled "Effect of Pipping Rate and Hatching Nature on the Development of Artificially Incubated Ostrich Chicks".

The lack of more presentations on incubation research concerning ostriches showed that the Western Cape Department of Agriculture still plays a vital role in research that aims to improve productivity and ensure the viability of the ostrich industry. Joining the IFRG opens new avenues to look at in future research concerning incubation and embryonic development.

The annual meeting of the IFRG arranged for the next combined IFRG and the Fundamental Physiology and Perinatal Development Group (FPPDG) meeting to take place in Berlin, Germany from 22-24 October 2025. This will also be the 50-year celebration for the two groups. AP

Learn more:

Effect of Pipping Rate and Hatching Nature on the Development of Artificially Incubated Ostrich Chicks.
shorturl.at/eiEOT

For more information, contact **Dr Zanell Brand**: ✉ zanell.brand@westerncape.gov.za

Western Cape to host MCAP Leadership Council meeting in 2025

By Dr Ilse Trautmann

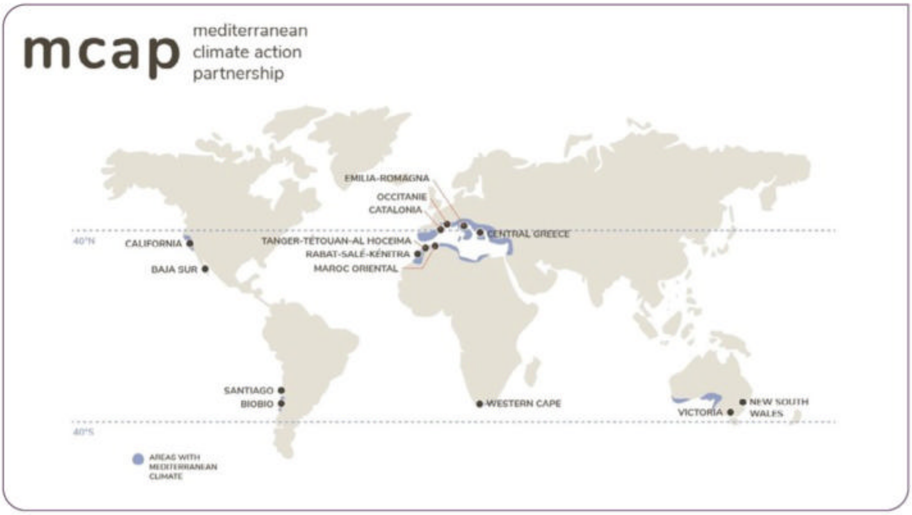
Western Cape, South Africa. Photo © NASA Earth Observatory

As reported in the *AgriProbe* Vol. 21(1) pp. 18-23, the Western Cape Government is one of the founding members of the Mediterranean Climate Action Partnership (MCAP), which includes 16 sub-national regions of the world with a Mediterranean climate. MCAP members committed to work together to advance a common agenda and collective action to protect communities and ecosystems in these regions from the increasing threats of climate change.

> The MCAP will hold significant benefits for the Western Cape and its drive to become a low-carbon and climate-resilient province.

Since signing the partnership agreement at COP28 in Dubai in December 2023, the three working groups on drought, fire and extreme heat commenced their work and compilation of actions plans. This was followed by the first Leadership Council meeting, which was held in Barcelona, Spain during June/July 2024.

It is with excitement that we announce the second Leadership Council will be held during May 2025 in Cape Town after the Western Cape team successfully convinced the secretariat that the Western Cape has much to offer in terms of success stories in climate change mitigation and adaptation and that hosting the event in Cape Town will undoubtedly fast track some initiatives and projects between the respective regions.


mcap
mediterranean
climate action
partnership
EMILIA-ROMAGNA
OCCITANIE
CATALONIA
CENTRAL GREECE
40°N
CALIFORNIA
BAJA SUR
TANGER-TÉTOUAN-AL HOCEIMA
RABAT-SALÉ-KÉNITRA
MAROC ORIENTAL
SANTIAGO
BIOBIO
WESTERN CAPE
VICTORIA
NEW SOUTH WALES
40°S
AREAS WITH MEDITERRANEAN CLIMATE

MCAP formally launched in 2023 at COP28 in Dubai, with 16 inaugural members representing regions in Africa, Australia, Europe, as well as North and South America.

2 December 2023: Signatories of Statement of Commitment to MCAP.

During the launch and press conference on 2 December 2023, Dr Trautmann signed a Statement of Commitment on behalf of the Western Cape Government to become a partner of the Mediterranean Climate Action Partnership (MCAP).

Learn more!

1. Read the press release on the launch of MCAP here: shorturl.at/LlrOh

2. A comprehensive action agenda (2024 – 2026) was discussed during the event and discussions have already started on actions between the regions. Scan the QR code or visit shorturl.at/J3uwi to download a copy of the MCAP 2024-2026 ACTION AGENDA FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL_ DECEMBER 2023.

Watch this!

Scan the QR code or visit shorturl.at/eWg93 to watch the video: 'Mediterranean Climate Action Partnership'. Published by ICLEI Global.

Learn more!

Scan the QR code or visit medclimate.org

For more information, contact **Dr Ilse Trautmann**, Deputy Director General: Agricultural Research and Regulatory Services at the WCDoA and the principal representative of the Western Cape on the Leadership Council of the MCAP: ✉ ilse.trautmann@westerncape.gov.za

SmartAgri at the International Day of Rural Women

By Prof. Stephanie Midgley

Thumbs-up to the passion, hopes and dreams, hard work and resilience of our rural women! In October 2024, the Western Cape Department of Agriculture (Programme: Rural Development) hosted a gathering of women from all walks of life in the town hall of Murraysburg (Central Karoo District) to celebrate International Day of Rural Women. The theme of the day was “Rural women confront the global cost-of-living crisis”.

Following the welcoming, Anchen de Peers delivered a rousing motivational speech – from the heart! She was the recipient of the 2024 Women Entrepreneurial Award: Female Worker, and hails from the farm Baakensrug near Nelspoort.

The Western Cape Department of Economic Development and Tourism staged a play – a “Financial literacy drama” – what an impactful way to convey important messages! Serious stuff, while also drawing many laughs from the audience. Adv. Cindy Abdol from the National Prosecuting Authority (Thuthuzela Care Centre – Sexual Offenses and Community Affairs, Worcester) created great insight and awareness on gender-based violence (GBV), which is a serious challenge in rural communities. The women were educated, inspired and advised on the correct processes to follow by victims of GBV.

Western Cape Department of Agriculture
Rural Development

Participants celebrating the International Day of Rural Women in Murraysburg.

Other themes covered included climate change and starting your agri-processing business. We shared information on climate change across the Western Cape, and how it may impact rural communities in the Murraysburg area.

Women are often the glue that holds families together by taking on multiple caring and livelihood responsibilities, and striving towards better food security in their homes and communities. Climate change projected for the Central Karoo could disproportionately impact them, and they will require continued access to locally relevant information.

It was a privilege to witness the resolve of these ladies to contribute towards a better future!

Learn more!
Scan the QR code or visit shorturl.at/l140W

isiXhosa summary

I-SmartAgri ngoSuku lwaMazwe ngaMazwe lwaBasetyhini baseMaphandleni

Ngomhla we 15 kwinyanga ye dwarha, iSebe lezoLimo leNtshona Koloni (Rural Development) lasingatha indibano yabasetyhini eMurraysburg kubhiyozelwa uSuku lwaMazwe ngaMazwe lwaBasetyhini baseMaphandleni. Umxholo wawusekelwe “Abafazi basemaphandleni bajamelana nengxaki yeendleko zokuphila kwihlabathi liphela”.

Nksz. Anchen de Peers, ofumene iBhaso kwicandelo loMsebenzi waBasetyhini ngonyaka ka-2024, uvule iqonga ngala ntsasa,waza walandelwa ngabadlali bomboniso abaphuma kwiSebe loPhuhliso lwezoQoqosho nezoKhenketho leNtshona Koloni. Adv. UCindy Abdol ovela kwiGunya leSizwe lezoTshutshiso (iZiko loKhathalelo laseThuthuzela) wondlalela abaphulaphuli ulwazi malunga nobundlobongela obusekelwe kwisini (GBV), kunye neengcebiso ezichanekileyo ezinoku landelwa ngamaxhoba.

Eminye imixholo ebixutyishwa kukutshintsha kwemozulu kunye nendlela zokuqala ishishini lakho le-agri-processing. Kuye kwakhona nexesha lokwabelana ngolwazi malunga nendlela utshintsho lwemozulu olunokuchaphazela ngayo uluntu lwasemaphandleni, ngakumbi abafazi, abazalisekisa uxanduva oluninzi lokunyamekela nokuziphilisa. Iyachulumancisa into yokubona lamanenekazi ezityanda igila ekuthatheni inxaxheba ngekamva.

For more information, contact **Prof. Stephanie Midgley**: ✉ stephanie.midgley@westerncape.gov.za

Photo courtesy Vergelegen Estate, Cape Winelands.

Dr Dirk Troskie.

A giant steps out!

by Dr Ilse Trautmann

From humble beginnings as a lecturer in Farm Management at Kromme Rhee Agricultural College from 1988 to 1992 and agricultural economist from 1992 at the Western Cape Department of Agriculture (WCDoA), Dr Dirk Troskie became a driving force in the department and the agricultural sector at both provincial and national level. Dr Dirk Troskie, Director: Business Planning and Strategy, will be leaving the department at the end of May 2025 after a long and exceptional career.

> Always referring to himself as the "shifting spanner" of the department was an understatement – he was in many instances offering the entire toolbox of strategic planning and foresight leading the department and sector to exceptional levels of excellence.

February 2015: An international conference on agricultural economies in Paris, France.

Watch this!
Scan the QR code or visit shorturl.at/awqL4 to watch the presentation video.

Dr Troskie was undoubtedly the best example of a "people first" leader and is respected by international, national, regional, provincial and local partners, collaborators as well as the citizens of the Western Cape. "Only the best service standards" was his mantra, which means there were no office hours, public holidays or weekends as the work had to be done within time limits and to the best of his ability. It was therefore no surprise to find emails and responses to emails during his leave or even when travelling abroad.

As Director: Business Planning and Strategy, his output includes the Annual Performance Plan, Annual Report, Annual Operational Plan, Annual Evaluation Framework, and the International Interaction Plan. In this regard Dr Troskie was a valuable resource who used all his expertise to improve and support the departmental programmes to improve on their input to the said plans. The department had been widely recognised for the quality and content of its plans and its futuristic approach to its planning, including long-term planning, taking into account the risk profile of the sector as determined globally, nationally and provincially.

As a firm believer and strategist in terms of the evaluations undertaken by the department (the WCDoA being the public leader in South Africa in this regard), the independency of both the evaluators and the process was of utmost importance to him.

Since 2014 Dirk took the lead in the department's evaluation programme and 41 evaluations have been completed to date. These evaluations not only provide evidence to improve the performance of individual interventions but also provide a basis for proper planning at a more holistic level.

From a research perspective, he remained particularly interested in the interaction between values, culture, quality, geography and farming (i.e. Geographical Indications or GIs), developing agrarian economies in a globalising world, embracing the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) in the context of local realities, as well as responsive and responsible government.

Partly as a result of these efforts by Dr Troskie, "Rooibos/Red Bush" became the first African product to be included in the GI Register of the European Union, and recently announced "Karoo Lamb/Karoo Lam" is the first South African GI to be included in the South African GI Register.

> **"Rooibos/Red Bush became the first African product to be included in the GI Register of the European Union."**

Rooibos (*Aspalathus linearis*).

»

Dr Troskie in typical style – talking to the agricultural sector on the departmental strategy and focus areas.

He was knowledgeable – albeit at formal or informal discussions over a glass of wine.

Learn more!
Download the Strategic Plan:
shorturl.at/U739T

Under his leadership and in preparing the WCDoA and the agricultural sector for change, the 4IR strategy was completed a few years ago.

One of the most significant projects embarked upon by Dr Troskie in 2022/2023 was the Africa Strategy for the Western Cape Province completed in May 2022. This strategy was widely welcomed and acknowledged and is a game-changing strategy for the sector to embark on African engagements, exports and collaboration.

The WCDoA's business and delivery model is entrenched in partnerships given the role of government to enable and look for efficiency gains. As a result, the department is privy to information from the various stakeholders that is important for planning and decision-making in the short and medium term. Dr Troskie's excellent managing of the stakeholder group of the department had been key to the successes in this regard and his continued engagements with the management of the department and key stakeholders were giving impetus to long-term decision-making to the benefit of the sector.

> **“One of the most significant projects embarked upon by Dr Troskie in 2022/2023 was the Africa Strategy for the Western Cape Province completed in May 2022.”**

Photo courtesy Vergelegen Estate, Cape Winelands.

Dr Troskie and his host family in June 2023: From left: Sandra Troskie (Dr Troskie's wife), Tuti (Agus' wife) and her sister Desi, Agus and Dr Dirk Troskie. In the front is Ray, Agus and Tuti's younger son. Their older son is Raka (photo on the right). (Interesting fact: Surnames are non-existent in parts of Indonesia.)

Raka, the Troskie family's Javanese friends' son (left), shares a freshly picked coconut with Dr Dirk Troskie after expertly scaling a tree – an everyday skill in Kampung Ranca Kuning.

Learn more!
Read the full report, *Communal Farming: Observations from Kampung Ranca Kuning* by Dr Dirk Troskie in *AgriProbe* Vol. 20, Issue 4: shorturl.at/3AI4X

"Going the extra mile" was not for Dr Troskie – he preferred "going the extra marathon"! For this reason and his exemplary commitment to the sector, Dirk received the Agriculturist of the Year 2023 award where his impact on the SA agricultural sector was applauded. During the Provincial Service Excellence Awards 2024, Dirk also received the Silver Award as Exemplary Senior Leader in the Western Cape Government.

> **"Dirk received the Agriculturist of the Year 2023 award where his impact on the SA agricultural sector was applauded."**

Dirks' footprint in our department is deep and he will be fondly remembered for his "only three things" comment when asked to respond.

Enjoy your travelling and time with your family, Dirk – you deserve it! But we are sure you will still be involved in agricultural matters – albeit if from the *stoep* of a wine farm where new ideas will emanate from your active pen whilst sipping on a good Pinotage! AP

For more information, contact **Dr Ilse Trautmann**, Deputy Director General: Agricultural Research and Regulatory Services at the WCDoA: ✉ ilse.trautmann@westerncape.gov.za

Observations from the 11th ReNAPRI Stakeholders Conference: **Whereto CAADP?**

by Dr Dirk Troskie

ETWORK OF
ULTURAL
RESEARCH
ITUTES
FARMER KNOW
YOUR SOIL

The African Network of Agricultural Policy Research Institutes (ANAPRI) held its annual stakeholder meeting during November 2024 in Dakar, Senegal.

Some of the recurring themes from previous years included:

1) Africa is still challenged by the fact that, according to some calculations, more than 65% of its soils are depleted, with the result that average yields are substantially lower than the global average. To address this problem the Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan (AFSH-AP) was adopted earlier in 2024 during a conference in Nairobi.
2) Valuable lessons were learned during the initiative on promoting adaptation and resilience to climate change in Africa (CACCI). After all, most people vulnerable to climate change live in Africa.
3) Per capita calorie intake is increasing, but too slowly to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal target of zero hunger by 2030.
4) The Private Sector Value Chain Analysis (PPVC) approach is innovative and creates targeted solutions in specific African countries.

CONFERENCE Booklet

11th ANNUAL
ANAPRI
STAKEHOLDERS CONFERENCE
26th-28th November, 2024

Azalaï Hotel
Dakar, Senegal

Learn more!
Download the Conference Booklet!
shorturl.at/ZBbWU

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[1] The Regional Network of Agricultural Policy Research Institutes (ReNAPRI) was formed in 2012 as a network of African national agricultural policy research institutions with the objective of promoting evidence-based policymaking. The original seven members (mainly from Southern Africa) have since expanded to 16 members from 15 countries in Central, East, West, and Southern Africa. As membership has now expanded beyond Southern Africa, the name changed during 2024 from "Regional" to "African". South Africa is represented by the Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy (BFAP), which is one of the founder members of the organisation. Every year ReNAPRI holds a meeting of member institutes during which policy issues of relevance to Africa are discussed.

Conference delegates.

“What happened to CAADP?”

The one topic discussed at the Conference that can be highlighted in more detail is the future of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Plan (CAADP). CAADP was originally signed in 2014 and the member countries of the African Union (AU) agreed with the Maputo commitments to support agricultural-led growth by spending 10% of their national budgets on agricultural development, which will lead to 6% annual economic growth.

This Agreement was expanded by the Malabo declaration in 2015 covering the period up to 2025.

It was expected during the Conference that the Kampala Declaration, to be issued after a meeting of African Heads of State in Uganda from 9 to 10 January 2025, will cover the period up to 2035. See the CAADP News Update on page 31.

»

> “What do African agricultural policy analysts talk about?”

It is interesting that the new buzzword is “agri-food systems” with the whole chain from field to fork being covered. In the process emphasis will be placed not only on primary production, but also on nutrition and the identification of certain diagnostic indicators throughout the agri-food system. It follows that the much flaunted 10% to be spent on agriculture will not only focus on primary agriculture anymore, but on the whole food system, including value chain infrastructure and nutrition.

> This emphasis on the agri-food systems goes straight against the exclusive emphasis placed on soil health and soil nutrition as being the main policy focus for African agriculture, as proposed in the AFSH-AP. An interesting debate and powerplay is in the offering.

It was indicated that, despite all the challenges, CAADP has shown progress. However, warnings against policy reversal were expressed and some signs of such were identified. These include:

1. Growing popularity of input subsidy schemes (e.g. fertiliser and seed subsidies).
2. Frequency of export prohibitions.
3. Price controls for a rising number of products.
4. Plans for agencies to monitor traders.
5. Rising debt burden in more countries.
6. Recent decline in public expenditure in agriculture.

A word of appreciation needs to be extended to the Western Cape Department of Agriculture for making it possible for the author to attend the event. If any *AgriProbe* reader is interested in the full report or additional information, they are more than welcome to contact the author. **AP**

For more information, contact **Dr Dirk Troskie**: ✉ dirk.troskie@westerncape.gov.za

CAADP News Update

CAADP Extraordinary Summit 2025 delegates.

In January 2025 the African Union (AU) adopted a new agricultural development strategy that will see the continent increase its agrifood output by 45% by 2035 and transform its agri-food systems as part of its new plan to become food secure in a decade. This is after the African Union Extraordinary Summit on the Post-Malabo Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) held in Kampala, Uganda, adopted the 10-year CAADP Strategy and Action Plan, and the Kampala CAADP Declaration on Building Resilient and Sustainable Agrifood Systems in Africa, which will be implemented from 2026 to 2035.

In the Kampala declaration, the 55 AU member states set forth six commitments that should transform and strengthen the agri-food system on the continent:

1. Intensifying sustainable food production, agro-industrialization, and trade.
2. Boosting investment and financing for accelerated agrifood systems transformation.
3. Ensuring food and nutrition security.
4. Advancing inclusivity and equitable livelihoods.
5. Building resilient agrifood systems.
6. Strengthening agrifood systems governance.

Learn more!

1. The African Union adopts ten-year strategy and action plan to transform Africa's agri-food systems and ensure food security
2. caadpkampalasummit.go.ug

From Elsenburg College to award-winning winemakers

by Robyn Carstens

Vergenoegd Löw wine cellar.

Mvuselelo (Vusi) Dalicuba and Kiara Scott Farmer are two winemakers you should remember. Both have had remarkable journeys at the Elsenburg Agricultural Training Institute (EATI) and have gone on to become award-winning winemakers.

"My winemaking lecturer was Lorraine Geldenhuys and she's a very passionate woman. She instilled good values in us. She wanted to make sure we were going to be the best winemakers out there," says Kiara. This approach has helped both Vusi and Kiara achieve great success in the wine industry.

Vusi started as an intern at EATI and has come a long way since he was a boy who used to pinch grapes from the nearby vineyards in Kayamandi.

VERGENOEGD
LÖW
MERLOT
Amalie

Vusi Dalicuba, winemaker at Vergenoegd.

Vergenoegd Löw Wine Estate.

Learn more!
vergenoegd.co.za/wines

Watch this!
shorturl.at/kwRu5

Today, Vusi is the winner of the VinLog Merlot Trophy at the 2024 Michelangelo International Wine & Spirits Awards for his 2022 Vergenoegd Löw Amalie Merlot.

Vusi joined Vergenoegd Löw in 2021, and just three years later he is proud to receive this prestigious award.

Corius Visser, the managing director of Vergenoegd Löw, realised the estate needed a full-time winemaker and called his friend Abrie Beeslaar at Kanonkop for advice. Beeslaar recommended Vusi, who was already a talented young winemaker with a master's degree and experience working at Kanonkop.

Vusi's 2022 Vergenoegd Löw Amalie Merlot earned 90 points in the 2024 South Africa Special Report by international wine critic Tim Atkin. He was also recognised as a runner-up at the inaugural 2024 Next Generation Awards, organised by Winemag.co.za.

His 2022 Vergenoegd Löw Lara Cabernet Sauvignon received 95 points, making him a winemaker to watch.

»

Kiara Scott, head winemaker at Hazendal Wine Estate.

Kiara Scott Farmer from Mitchells Plain graduated with a bachelor's degree in Viticulture and Oenology from EATI. While studying at Elsenburg from 2011 to 2014, she learned about the Cape Winemakers Guild Protégé Programme. Kiara was chosen for this respected programme and spent three years gaining experience under well-known winemakers who inspired her and helped shape her career.

BROOKDALE
CHENIN BLANC

Kiara's first work experience was with David Nieuwoudt at Cederberg Cellars, and she later worked with Carl van de Merwe at De Morgenzon and Charles Hopkins at De Grendel. She also got the opportunity to work internationally, gaining experience in the Rhône Valley, Sancerre and the Russian River in Sonoma, California.

As a consultant winemaker for Brookdale, Duncan Savage (of Savage Wines) saw her potential early on and brought her in as an assistant winemaker. In 2017, they worked together to create the first vintage of Brookdale Chenin Blanc, which was well-received and helped establish Brookdale as a producer of fine, elegant wines.

BROOKDALE
CHENIN BLANC

Learn more!
brookdale-estate.com/blog/award-winning-chenin

Kiara's time working with Duncan Savage and Brookdale owner Tim Rudd led to her appointment as the head winemaker at Brookdale in 2019. She took charge of producing the Brookdale Chenin Blanc, the Brookdale Sixteen Field Blend and the Mason Road range, which includes Chenin Blanc, Syrah, and Serendipity Rosé.

In 2024, Kiara made history as the first woman of colour to win the Diners Club Winemaker of the Year award for her 2022 Brookdale Estate Old Vine Chenin Blanc, which was named the best in the Chenin Blanc category.

HAZENDAL
Blanc
HAZENDAL

Kiara ended her time at Brookdale on a high note and has been the new Head Winemaker at Hazendal Wine Estate since December 2024.

Learn more!
shorturl.at/qXjjk

Kiara's list of achievements is equally impressive. Under her leadership, the Brookdale Chenin Blanc Single Vineyard 2020 won the Trophy for Best Old Vine Wine 2022 at South Africa's prestigious Trophy Wine Show. This wine scored a Gold rating of 97/100 and received the Rosa Kruger Trophy. It also won Gold at the Decanter World Wine Awards 2022, Double Gold at the South Africa Wine Awards London 2022, and received a 17.5/20 rating from Jancis Robinson MW, wine correspondent for the *Financial Times*. In the *Tim Atkin 2022 South Africa Special Report*, it scored 93 points.

> **"Cheers to Vusi and Kiara's continued success!"**

So, the next time you enjoy a glass of Vergenoegd Löw or Brookdale Estate's award-winning wines, you'll know the story behind them – two young winemakers from Elsenburg making a big impact in the world of wine.

Cheers to Vusi and Kiara's continued success! **AP**

For more information, contact **Robyn Carstens**: ✉ robyn.carstens@westerncape.gov.za

Hemp training prepares Western Cape officials for role in emerging crop sector

by Dr Pippa Karsen

Sackcloth made from hemp rope.

Close-up of hemp seeds that were not separated from the hemp plant. Photo © D-Kuru

In October 2024, 28 officials from the Western Cape Department of Agriculture (WCDoA) and seven from the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) attended a comprehensive hemp cultivation training session at Elsenburg. The training, organised by the ARC and Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) was facilitated by the WCDoA to prepare officials to guide farmers and stakeholders in exploring the potential of hemp as an alternative crop in the region.

The Western Cape's agricultural landscape faces new challenges due to shifting climate patterns and market demands. Hemp is being considered for its potential benefits, including improving soil health and providing economic opportunities. However, its viability in the Western Cape remains uncertain due to the region's hot, dry summers and the crop's significant water and daylight length requirements. Current research is focused on identifying varieties better suited to the Western Cape's unique conditions.

Kwena-Kwena Mokgohloa leading a lecture on hemp cultivation at Elsenburg, sharing valuable insights with participants during the hemp training session.

Participants at the hemp cultivation training held at Elsenburg, hosted by the Western Cape Department of Agriculture.

The training covered essential topics, including the ARC's hemp research programme, compliance with regulatory frameworks, and the differences between hemp and marijuana. Attendees also learned about cultivation practices, such as soil preparation, irrigation and harvesting, as well as pest and disease management, post-harvest handling and market development.

Upon successful completion, the officials were assessed on their knowledge, with certificates to be awarded by the ARC and DALRRD.

This training is crucial step in ensuring government officials are equipped to support the development of the hemp industry in the province while carefully considering its potential challenges and benefits.

CanPlan

The WCDoA commissioned a study on the current and future scenario (production, processing, exports, etc.) of cannabis and hemp in the agricultural sector during late 2022. The study was completed in February 2023 and the Western Cape Cannabis Framework and Implementation Plan, also known as the CanPlan, was launched in March 2023.

The purpose of the CanPlan was to develop a roadmap for opportunities and challenges of cannabis (for medicinal purposes) and hemp (for fibre and other purposes) production and processing in the Western Cape, and in particular for the agricultural sector, focussing on economic development and job creation. **AP**

Learn more!

1. Scan the QR code or go to shorturl.at/ARa2N to download the CanPlan Implementation Plan.
2. Scan the QR code or go to shorturl.at/qkw7j to download the CanPlan Literature Review.

For more information, contact **Dr Pippa Karsen**: ✉ pippa.karsen@westerncape.gov.za

Lindie-Alet van Staden: Western Cape Prestige Agri-Worker of 2024

by Melvin Genuka

L'Ormarins Estate in the Franschhoek Region.

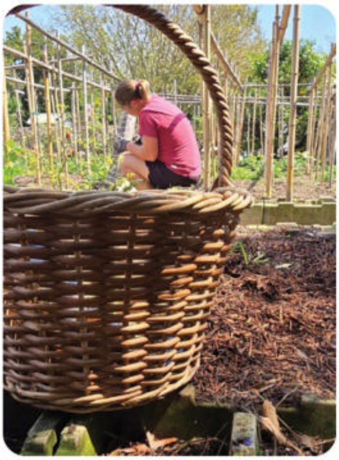
In November 2024 an historic moment occurred in the history of the Agri-Worker of the Year Competition when Lindie-Alet van Staden was crowned agri-worker of the year. Lindie-Alet is the first winner from the white ethnic group, and also the first provincial winner hailing from the Franschhoek Region.

Lindie-Alet, currently employed as Garden & Olive Manager on L'Ormarins Estate in the Franschhoek area, is a woman that lives for the agricultural sector. As she would proudly say: "*Met my hande in die grond is ek die gelukkigste.*"

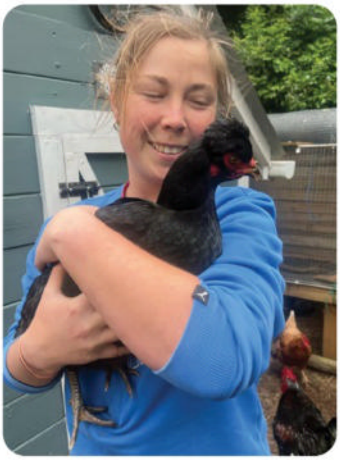
Lindie-Alet was born and grew up in Brits, North West Province on her grandfather's farm, prior to moving to Losperfontein Correctional Services, where her father was responsible for the vegetable farming to supply fresh produce, as well as the dairy and gardens. She matriculated from Die Hoërskool Wagpos in 2008 and pursued a career in Geotechnical Laboratory Analysis in Pretoria. But in 2011 she realised she wanted to be part of a greener industry. She graduated in

Western Cape Department of Agriculture
SHOPRITE
SHOPRITE

From left: Dr Harry Malila (Director General, Western Cape Government), Dr Mogale Sebopetsa (Head of Department), Minister Ivan Meyer, Lindie-Alet van Staden, Pieter van Zyl (Shoprite) and Premier Alan Winde.



Lindie-Alet in her happy place.



Lindie-Alet with one of her chickens.

"Met my vingers in die grond is ek die gelukkigste."

Lindie-Alet with team members.

Team members.

BTech Horticulture cum laude in 2015 and two weeks after writing her last exam she embraced the industry on an estate in Somerset West and transferred to the production side of the farm in 2016. She later took up employment at Oak Valley Estate's Flower Division where she passionately shared her love for agriculture with the agri-workers reporting to her, nurturing good interpersonal relationships with them that she still treasures and maintains to this day.

Lindie-Alet is responsible for over 65ha of gardens, ranging from aesthetical gardens, composting and waste management, fruit and vegetables, olives, cut flowers and nursery production. She is furthermore responsible for managing the beehives on the farm, supplying raw honey to the tasting rooms. She is also the environmental officer on the farm.

When she is not gardening, farming and beekeeping at work, she is gardening, farming and beekeeping at home. Her main passion is her vegetable garden with 80 different varieties of tomatoes and several other unusual vegetables. She sees her home as her small farm in suburbia with her chickens (even hens that lay blue eggs!), rabbits, bees, dogs and cats.

Lindie-Alet's success in the 2024 Prestige Agri-Worker of the Year competition is a story of humbleness, a story of many firsts and a story of passion. Passion for agriculture and most of all a passion for people. As she fondly said in her victory speech: "A manager is only as strong as the people in the team you are leading" and "*Jou eerste wiele in die landbou is nie 'n blink motor nie, maar 'n kruiwa*". **AP**

For more information, contact **Melvin Genuka**: ✉ melvin.genuka@westerncape.gov.za

Dux Students: Class of 2024

by Sandile Mkhwanazi

During its 126th graduation ceremony, the Elsenburg Agricultural Training Institute (EATI) highlighted the academic excellence of the class of 2024. A total of 189 students graduated and the Dux students of 2024 were an all-female line up across all three programmes, namely Agricultural Skills Development (ASD), Diploma in Agriculture and Bachelor of Agriculture.

Minister of Agriculture, Economic Development and Tourism in the Western Cape, Dr Ivan Meyer, handed these special awards to Danelle Groenewald, Engela Uithaler and Johanna Slabbert respectively. The programme director on the day and hostel father, Brenton Maarman, jokingly said the recipients all stayed in the hostel and clearly the food served at the hostel had an impact on their success!

Below is a bit more about the journey of the 2024 Dux students:

Danelle Groenewald in a field with sheep.

Danelle Groenewald: Dux Agriculture Skills Development Learnership Programme Recipient

Danelle's love for the outdoors and caring for animals encouraged her to further her knowledge on animal production at Elsenburg. She is currently based on a smallholding in Philadelphia in the Western Cape. She says the visits to commercial farms of their choice that students got to go on, also gave her a sense of independence and boosted her confidence. Her dream is to start her own sheep farm one day and because of this big dream, she has articulated from the Learnership programme to the Diploma in Agriculture, which she will be pursuing at the college. "I am excited to be back to gain more knowledge from my lecturers," she concluded.

Engela Uithaler: Dux Diploma in Agriculture Recipient

Raised on a small farm in Hoeko Valley, 12km from Ladismith, the feeling of getting her hands dirty made Engela fall in love with agriculture. She remarks that the art of bridging theory and practical made her want to enrol at Elsenburg. Currently working at Warwick Wine Estate as a Cape Winemakers Guild Protégé, she feels the family-oriented environment in Elsenburg gave her a better understanding of the process of winemaking. She encouraged the class of 2025 to heed advice from lecturers and enjoy the process of learning whilst making friends at the College. Engela received her first Dux award when she graduated from the ASD Learnership programme. She then articulated to the Diploma programme and again received the Dux award when she graduated. This star student is therefore a double Dux award recipient!

Engela Uithaler filling barrels at Warwick Estate.

Johanna Slabber driving a feed truck.

Johanna Slabber: Dux Bachelor of Agriculture Recipient

Growing up on a farm in Moorreesburg in the Western Cape, Johanna's love for animals was cultivated at a very young age. "I have always wanted to work outside and to work with animals," she said. Her Elsenburg journey has never had a dull moment with her highlights ranging from the multiple practical trips to farms, feedlots and abattoirs. The depth and knowledge received from lecturers, especially Dr Annelie Cloete, has made her wish she could still come back for more and tap into it. "Count the number of pages you need to study for each module and count the days you have until you have to write the test, then do simple maths to find out how many pages you need to study each day to stay on track," she concluded, as she gave advice to the class of 2025. AP

For more information, contact **Sandile Mkhwanazi**: ✉ sandile.mkhwanazi@westerncape.gov.za

Recognising the value of digital marketing to enhance agricultural brands' positioning

by Robyn Carstens

As the Fourth Industrial Revolution unfolds, digital marketing has become an integral tool for businesses to remain competitive. The agricultural sector, traditionally reliant on conventional marketing strategies, has also felt the need to leverage digital marketing strategies to position brands effectively in an evolving digital landscape.

A research study, conducted as part of a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree in Strategic Brand Communication at the Independent Institute of Education: Vega School, focused on agricultural small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) using digital marketing to enhance their brand visibility and growth. Through qualitative analysis, the study sheds light on the potential benefits, challenges and outcomes of adopting digital marketing strategies, like search engine optimisation (SEO), social media marketing and Google advertisements.

Search Engine Marketing
SEO
Search Engine Optimization
PPC
Pay Per Click
SMO
Social Media Optimization

Prepare to be found on the internet.

The study found that while the participant did not have formally documented digital marketing strategies, they had a good understanding of the essential role of digital platforms in reaching and engaging customers. Agricultural SMEs are recognising the necessity of building an online presence to remain relevant, engage with customers and grow their businesses.

Similar to other sectors, agriculture has witnessed a shift from traditional to integrated marketing practices due to the rise of the internet. The study highlighted that platforms such as Facebook and Google play a crucial role in creating visibility and enhancing brand recognition for agricultural SMEs. Digital marketing offers a cost-effective means for SMEs to expand their reach and engage with a broader audience.

One of the most important insights gained was that brand authenticity and storytelling have become vital differentiators for SMEs operating in the agricultural sector.

Unlike large corporations that may use aggressive sales tactics, smaller businesses in agriculture often rely on establishing a personal connection with their audience through relatable narratives and authentic content.

This finding aligns with the brand positioning model outlined by Keller (2020), which emphasises the importance of differentiating a brand by highlighting unique values and characteristics. For agricultural SMEs, this differentiation is often rooted in values such as sustainability, local sourcing or family-owned heritage. By incorporating these values into their digital marketing strategies, SMEs can create strong emotional connections with their customers, fostering trust and loyalty.

> **“You can have the best product in the world, but if you are not seen online, you don’t exist.”**

The research also pointed out the significance of visibility in digital spaces. The participant highlighted Google visibility, a presence on social media and the importance of SEO with the statement, “If you are not found on Google, you really don’t exist… You can have the best product in the world, but if you are not seen online, you don’t exist.” This aligns with the current trend where consumers increasingly rely on Google search when looking for products or services.

The study also explored how SMEs could benefit from utilising the RACE planning framework to structure their digital marketing efforts.

The RACE model, developed by Chaffey (2023), is a useful tool for SMEs to plan and optimise their digital marketing strategies through four key stages: **Reach**, **Act**, **Convert** and **Engage**.

The **Reach** stage involves growing awareness and directing potential customers to online platforms. This is done through social media, Google advertisements and SEO to ensure their websites or digital platforms are visible when consumers search online for agricultural products or services.

The **Act** stage encourages engagement with the content, such as reading blog posts, exploring product details or signing up for newsletters. For agricultural businesses, this could mean educating customers about the products’ origins, farming practices or the benefits of buying locally.

The **Convert** stage focuses on turning potential leads into actual sales. Agricultural SMEs often use Google advertisements and special promotions to attract customers and increase conversions.

The final stage, **Engage**, emphasises the importance of building long-term relationships with customers by encouraging repeat sales, feedback and customer satisfaction.

»

E-Mail
Digital Marketing
VDO
Viral
Roi
SEO
to do list
~~-brainstorm~~
~~-research~~
- sketch

Plan a digital marketing strategy.

A barrier for agricultural SMEs is often the lack of resources and expertise to manage digital marketing efforts effectively. Many SMEs do not have dedicated marketing teams and lack the time or knowledge to track and analyse their digital marketing metrics. This underscores the need for professional support in developing and implementing digital marketing strategies for agricultural businesses.

The research revealed that SMEs rely mostly on ad hoc digital marketing efforts. While these efforts may lead to some success, agricultural SMEs would greatly benefit from formalising their digital marketing strategies, tracking performance metrics and investing in professional advice to enhance their brand positioning in the consumer's mind.

The findings indicate that digital marketing helps SMEs enhance their brand positioning and also supports long-term growth and customer loyalty. Therefore, as digital tools become more accessible and essential in the world today, agricultural businesses should adopt these digital marketing strategies to remain competitive.

This research was made possible by an Honours degree bursary provided by the Western Cape Department of Agriculture. AP

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Empowering Farmers

Practical financial guidance from Agricultural Economic Services

by Mzwanele Lingani &
Ziyanda Mtshiselwa-Poswa

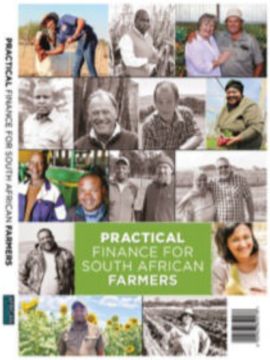
The lack of financial management among businesses in the agricultural sector remains a concern. It is for this reason that *African Farming*, an agricultural media platform for emerging and commercial black farmers, decided to host information days focusing on financial advice to support and develop black farmers.

Through this initiative, the Western Cape Department of Agriculture (WCDoA) was invited to participate in one of the information days organised for the Western Cape at Langgewens Research Farm in May 2024. At this event, Ziyanda Mtshiselwa-Poswa and Mzwanele Lingani of Agricultural Economic Services, under the Production Economics and Farm Management division, shared their insights on the importance and benefits of farming businesses keeping financial records as these are essential for decision-making and statutory compliance. Additionally, these officials also highlighted how the WCDoA assists farmers in this regard through the Financial Record-Keeping Programme.

Following this event, these two officials were requested to contribute a chapter in a book published in October 2024, titled *Practical Finance for South African Farmers*. Approximately 14 experts across various fields contributed 21 chapters to the book.

The book covers different topics with valuable information that caters for everyone in the agricultural sector. Topics such as retirement planning, financial planning and analysis, estate planning, and budgeting techniques are not solely applicable to farmers but can benefit individuals both on a personal and professional level. AP

Mzwanele Lingani and Amelia Genis of *African Farming* and *Landbouweekblad*.
Photo © Loetfia Rosenberg


PRACTICAL FINANCE FOR SOUTH AFRICAN FARMERS
PRACTICAL FINANCE FOR SOUTH AFRICAN FARMERS

To buy your copy, visit: shorturl.at/KC50K

For more information, contact **Mzwanele Lingani**: ✉ mzwanele.lingani@westerncape.gov.za or **Ziyanda Mtshiselwa-Poswa**: ✉ ziyanda.poswa@westerncape.gov.za

Connecting lives by spreading awareness

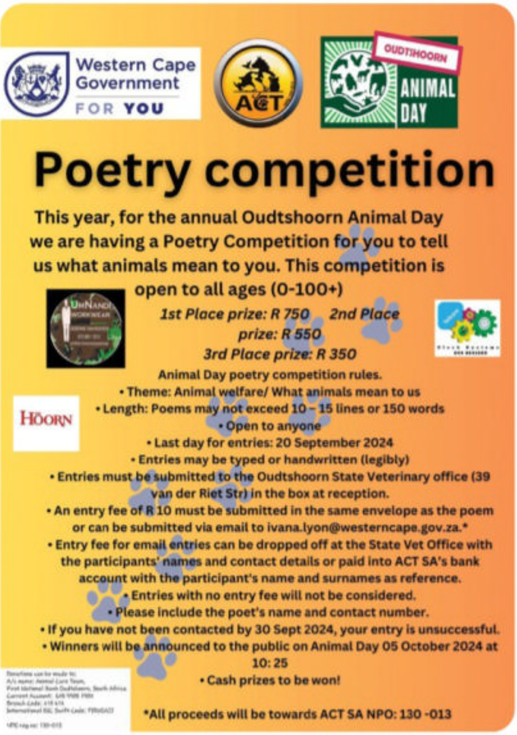
An ode to all creatures great and small

by Dr Ivana Lyon

Community engagement can wear many different faces – from doing outreaches and vaccination campaigns to school talks. All of which are crucial to creating and maintaining good welfare of animals and ultimately creating a space of general consideration for animals among all walks of life.

This year at the State Veterinary Office in Oudtshoorn, community engagement was pursued through yet another avenue – poetry. Members of the community, big and small, young and old, were asked to write a poem about animal welfare or what animals mean to them.

Although an unconventional way of community engagement, poetry has a way to consider and include those who would otherwise go unseen or unheard, as animals often do. Those often marginalised by society, especially children and senior citizens, had an opportunity to act as a spokesperson, activist, defender or even just an admirer and supporter of animals.



Western Cape Government
FOR YOU
ACT
OUDTSHOORN
ANIMAL DAY
UMNANDI WORKWEAR
HÖORN

Poetry competition

This year, for the annual Oudtshoorn Animal Day we are having a Poetry Competition for you to tell us what animals mean to you. This competition is open to all ages (0-100+)

1st Place prize: R 750 2nd Place prize: R 550

3rd Place prize: R 350

Animal Day poetry competition rules.

- Theme: Animal welfare/ What animals mean to us
- Length: Poems may not exceed 10 – 15 lines or 150 words
- Open to anyone
- Last day for entries: 20 September 2024
- Entries may be typed or handwritten (legibly)
- Entries must be submitted to the Oudtshoorn State Veterinary office (39 van der Riet Str) in the box at reception.
- An entry fee of R 10 must be submitted in the same envelope as the poem or can be submitted via email to ivana.lyon@westerncape.gov.za.*
- Entry fee for email entries can be dropped off at the State Vet Office with the participants' names and contact details or paid into ACT SA's bank account with the participant's name and surnames as reference.
- Entries with no entry fee will not be considered.
- Please include the poet's name and contact number.
- If you have not been contacted by 30 Sept 2024, your entry is unsuccessful.
- Winners will be announced to the public on Animal Day 05 October 2024 at 10: 25
- Cash prizes to be won!

*All proceeds will be towards ACT SA NPO: 130 -013

Honde-
vriende
byt nie!
Kinders wat Omgee
'n Versameling
Kortverhale
HUMANE EDUCATION

Books distributed at school talks by Louise van der Merwe, in partnership with the OneHealth, One Welfare project.

Learn more!
Scan the QR code or visit:
www.naturebased.education/resources

Winning entry:
Furry hearts made whole

"In quiet eyes a story told,
Of whispered dreams both young and old.
They ask for little, just a chance,
to live their lives, a simple dance."
– May Lotz

The winners were announced in October 2024 on a day reserved to increase rabies awareness among members of the public to keep everyone informed and safe. Free rabies vaccinations were offered to the public and rabies awareness was raised throughout the year with school talks and rabies vaccination campaigns, focussing on areas where animals are at a higher risk of coming into contact with a wild animal with an unknown rabies status.

The poetry competition was a way to include and reach more people to share the message of animal welfare, particularly those who cannot partake in conventional methods of community engagement. People in retirement facilities, schoolchildren, an animal lover in a no-pet household or even just a busy mom down the street. It was a reminder about the significance animals add to our lives and how we are changed for the better because of it.

From the sheer number of entries during the debut of this competition and the effort that is evident in the writing, community engagement as we have grown to know it is ever-changing as our societal demands and architecture are shifting. Participants were asked to write a 15-line poem with the abovementioned theme, which led to many quality poems from many people from different walks of life. Although no two entrants were the same, they all share a significant connection – a love and respect for animals.

1st Runner-up:
Honde in ons lewens

"Deur dik en dun staan hulle ons by.
'n Konstante metgesel, 'n liefde om te bly."
– Layhla Janse, Grade 5

»

Dr Ivana Lyon (left) and third prize winner, Martie Kok.

In the post-Covid 19 age of technology and artificial intelligence, life looks much different to what it did 10 or even five years ago. We as a society have had to adjust and adapt to the increased dependence on electronics and performing tasks remotely. We have evolved from pictographs or abstract markings in caves to writing on paper to typing on a phone, tablet or computer. It is therefore only fitting that we in agriculture also adjust and evolve in our way of community engagement. Children born today will not relate to or experience the trials and tribulations of life the same way their parents or grandparents did. Thus, the responsibility of adaptation of methods of engaging with our local communities lies with us, those who have appointed ourselves as ambassadors of our local flora and fauna.

2nd Runner-up: My bondeltjie troos

"Jy's my serotonien, my psigiater en
ek betaal jou met liefde, kos en water."
– Martie Kok

Community engagement is a success when we focus on what connects rather than divides us; how we can work together rather than in solitude. And when we remember that these activities not only benefit us as humans, but ultimately the clawed and four-pawed contributors to our lives.

"From the farm to ocean deep,
promising their dreams to keep,
let's unite, protect their grace,
for animals share our living space."
– May Lotz AP

For more information, contact **Dr Ivana Lyon**: ✉ ivana.lyon@westerncape.gov.za

Leaders unite to tackle food insecurity in the Little Karoo for World Food Day 2024

by Vusumzi Zwelendaba

16 October 2024
World Food Day
RIGHT TO FOODS
for a Better Life and a Better Future
LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN) was founded on 16 October 1945 in the aftermath of World War II. Since then, World Food Day (WFD) has been globally recognised on this date, making it one of the most celebrated events on the UN calendar. Last year's theme, "**Right to Food for a Better Life and a Better Future**" (Leave No One Behind), underscored the urgent need to address food insecurity.

For the Western Cape Department of Agriculture (WCDoA), WFD is a flagship event, traditionally celebrated in the first week of October to mark the beginning of Food Security Month.

The department actively implements initiatives that ensure food security at the community and household levels, working closely with strategic partners to make a tangible impact.

The **#WorldFoodDay** 2024 theme, "**Right to foods for a better life and a better future**" spotlights the importance of diversity, nutrition, affordability, accessibility as well as the safety and sustainability of foods, raising awareness about how a greater diversity of nutritious foods should be available in our fields, fishing nets, markets, and on our tables, for the benefit of all. World Food Day 2024 launched 365 days of action to FAO's 80th anniversary – a global call to write the next chapter of FAO's journey together.

Learn more!

Scan the QR-code or visit: www.fao.org/world-food-day/en

Watch this!

Scan the QR-code or visit: shorturl.at/g1Fll

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From left: Julian Williams (AB InBev); Darryl Jacobs (Deputy Director General: Agricultural Development and Support Services); Dr Mogale Sebopetsa (Head of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture); Dr Ivan Meyer (Western Cape Minister of Agriculture, Economic Development and Tourism); Andrew Stroebel (Executive Mayor of Garden Route District Municipality); Jackie von Brandis (Executive Mayor of George Municipality); and Lionel Arnolds (Director of Community Development at the Department of Social Development).

Learn more!
Scan the QR-code
or visit: shorturl.at/BbTVp

During October 2024, the WCDoA, in partnership with Casidra and the George Municipality, hosted WFD celebrations at the Uniondale Rugby Sports Field. The initiative extended its reach to Avontuur and Haarlem, bringing food security interventions to these areas. Ahead of WFD, the department implemented 100 household food gardens – 34 in Haarlem and 64 in Uniondale – along with two subsistence projects at the Mina Moo Kleuterskool and Chris Nissan Crèche. Additionally, school food gardens were established at the Haarlem Senior Secondary School and Avontuur Primary School.

An additional 78 household gardens will be implemented before the end of the financial year, bringing the total number of supported households to over 200 by the end of the financial year. This support includes infrastructure development, production inputs, equipment, training, and continuous extension and advisory services to ensure long-term sustainability.

Chris Nissen Kleuterskool and Mina Moo Crèche were two subsistence projects supported in the Uniondale area.

Mina Moo Crèche.

The department also provided 64 households in Uniondale with fruit trees – peach and lemon varieties – to promote long-term food security. Additionally, through staff donations and sponsorships, a Food Mountain was created and distributed to five local NGOs/NPOs: Haarlem Speelskool, UNIEP, Feladelfia United Reformed Mission, Avontuur Speelskool and Addict Lives Matter.

Training played a crucial role in this initiative. Recipients received hands-on training in vegetable production, vermi-composting and food processing, led by the WCDoA's Agri-Processing On Wheels team. This ensured that beneficiaries were equipped with skills to maintain their gardens and maximise their yield.

Food Mountain received from our generous sponsors.

Participants during the vegetable processing training held in Haarlem on 10 October 2024.

> ***“From the first speaker to the last, leaders spoke in one accord about the urgency of tackling food insecurity.”***

In keeping with the tradition of “**Plant One Tree, Eat for Free**”, fruit trees were strategically planted in Uniondale. Haarlem and Avontuur were avoided due to their proximity to commercial fruit farms, where unmanaged trees could pose risks to established orchards.

The event commenced with a briefing at Uniondale Town Hall, attended by Dr Mogale Sebopetsa (Head of Department), senior officials from George Municipality, WCDoA senior managers, Casidra representatives and ward councillors. Delegations led by Dr Sebopetsa and Darryl Jacobs (Deputy Director-General) then conducted site visits to food security projects before convening at the Uniondale Sports Field for the main event.

For the first time, the event welcomed representatives from ProVeg, an organisation advocating for plant-based diets as a protein source. ProVeg hosted a competition to encourage vegetable consumption, with winners receiving cash prizes and a bicycle, awarded by Dr Ivan Meyer, Western Cape Minister of Agriculture, Economic Development and Tourism, and Dr Mogale Sebopetsa (HoD).

From the first speaker to the last, leaders spoke in one accord about the urgency of tackling food insecurity – not just in Uniondale, but across the Western Cape. They emphasised the importance of collaboration among stakeholders – speakers embraced the “Triple C” approach: Communicate, Connect and Collaborate. With a shared commitment, they pledged to leave no stone unturned in ensuring food security at household level.

The WCDoA also continued the long-standing World Food Day School Poster Competition, which aims to instil awareness about food security from an early age. Two schools were selected to roll-out the competition, which aligned with the curriculum and 2024’s theme. During October 2024, winners were awarded prizes, with support from the Western Cape Department of Education, Shoprite (sponsored prizes for the winners and brought a mobile soup kitchen), Chemuniqué (educational show on the importance of eggs in one’s diet), Kizzoo (an interactive dance and song production) and Nal’ibali (action songs and storytelling as well as sponsorship of books).

World Food Day remains a key event in the WCDoA’s calendar. With millions of people still going to bed hungry in the Western Cape, we are reminded of the importance of food security and the impact that sustainable solutions and self-sufficiency can have on society as a whole. AP

For more information, contact **Vusumzi Zwelendaba**: ✉ vusumzi.zwelendaba@westerncape.gov.za

The importance and practice of good veld management

by Louis Jordaan and Samantha Adey

Gouritz River.

Good veld management depends on the health and biodiversity of the natural resource. Biodiversity is the sum of all organisms that live together within the specific area. Health relates to the resilience of the natural resource to external shocks and changes. Human population growth and lifestyles have impacted on nature, mostly through exploitation and pollution of the natural resource.

This has led to the destruction of biodiversity and ultimately to climate change. Scientists warn that ecosystems are starting to approach tipping points – where they shift into a new, degraded state that further reduces their resilience. The future of the earth, as we know it, is in our hands. The conservation and management of natural resources is our responsibility and includes maintaining biodiversity and reducing our impact on nature. We often forget that we are part of nature; not separate from it, and that we are totally dependent on nature and the resources it provides.

Through good veld management, it is possible to improve the biodiversity of the natural resource and to reap long-term rewards. A number of factors determine the nature and extent of plant growth. These include: the climate, the underlying geology, altitude, slope, drainage and land use. Some factors cannot be managed (e.g. geology, altitude, slope) but sustainable land-use practices can make a significant, positive impact on the health of the natural resource.

The Gouritz Cluster Biosphere Reserve (GCBR) in South Africa's Western Cape is the country's largest biosphere reserve, where three globally recognised biodiversity hotspots – Fynbos, Succulent Karoo, and Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany – converge. The reserve includes three recognised UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the **Swartberg Complex**, **Boosmansbos Nature Reserve** and **Baviaanskloof**.

Learn more!
Scan the QR code or visit unesco.org/en/mab/gouritz-cluster

Louis Jordaan, Extension Officer, GCBR.

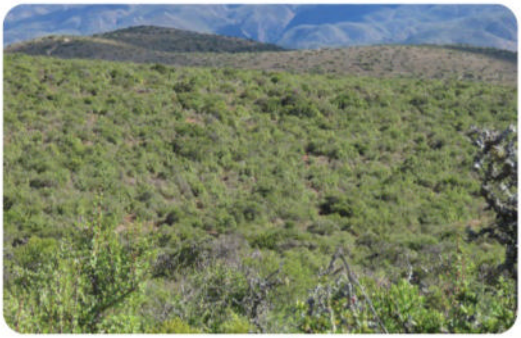
Watch this!
Scan the QR code
or visit shorturl.at/Dqeht

Good quality veld displays a number of characteristics:

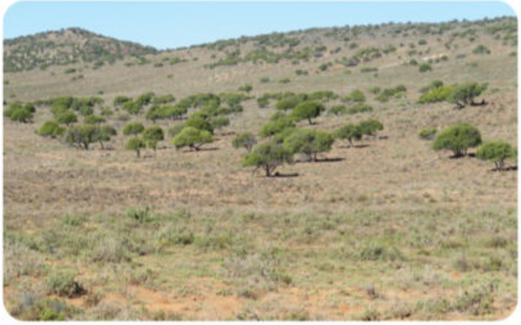
- Plant cover.
- A large number of palatable plant species that are in good condition and are reproducing (flowering, setting seed and evidence of young plants).
- The presence of organic matter on the ground (leaves and twigs).
- Ground between plants is covered in moss and/or lichens.
- Animals in the area that spread seed (e.g. birds, tortoises, porcupines).
- Evidence of animal activity (holes, digging, manure).
- Little to no soil erosion.

Veld evaluation

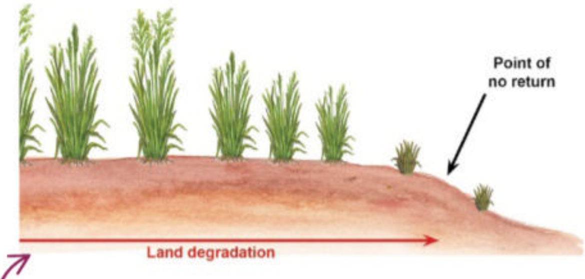
In arid areas, the irregularity of the veld can make the evaluation of the veld condition difficult, especially also the combination of domestic livestock and wild animals. It demands a rigorous study and analysis of every part of the farm and veld, even if the veld is in pristine condition. Historic farming practices have led to poor veld management, which had resulted in poor veld condition. Many areas of the Klein Karoo have been overgrazed by domestic livestock (an example of poor veld management practice) to such an extent that there has been a complete change of plant composition.



Veld in good condition.



Veld degraded as a result of overgrazing.



Did you know?

Some degraded land can recover by itself if the causes of degradation are removed. However, if degradation advances too far, the land fails to recover by itself (in terms of human time) and would need human assistance (restoration). This theoretical point of land degradation is dubbed by scientists as the ‘threshold of irreversibility’ or the ‘Point of no return’.

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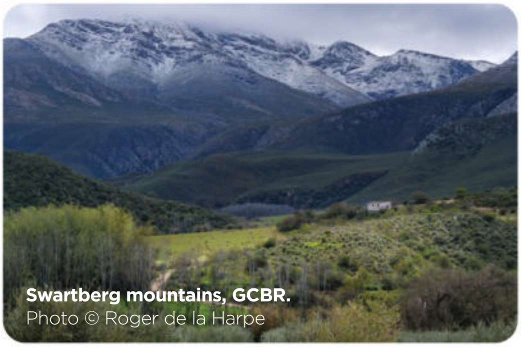
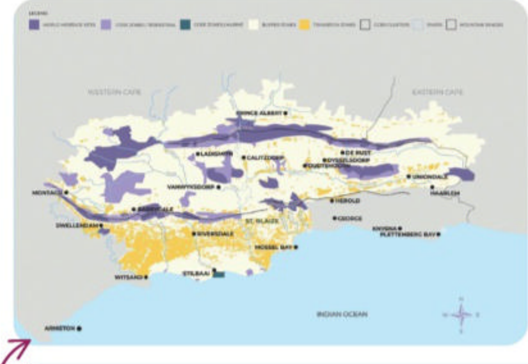


Swartberg mountains, GCBR.
Photo © Roger de la Harpe

Important aspects to consider when determining the condition of the veld include:

- The palatable species that occur, and the number of plants of those species per unit area.
- The condition of the plants – how heavily grazed and how healthy they are. Are the palatable species given sufficient time to flower, form seed and produce the next generation of plants, before being grazed? Not only are the palatable species that do occur important, but also those that one would expect to find in the area. Are they absent, or present in small numbers? This will give an idea of the management of the veld.
- Another aspect to consider, is the presence of poisonous plants, or non-palatable plants. Especially those that occur in large numbers, and those plants that do not naturally occur in the area.

Managing the veld well is essential for environmental sustainability and for the well-being of communities. As discussed, well-managed veld protects the habitat of plants, insects and animals and results in healthy ecosystems. Healthy ecosystems are more resilient to environmental stressors, such as climate change and pollution, than degraded, unhealthy ecosystems. Healthy ecosystems also have long-term stability and are better able to recover from disturbances, such as drought or flooding. Good veld management can reduce soil erosion and prevent land degradation. It also protects water resources by managing watershed areas and preventing the contamination of water sources.


WESTERN CAPE
EASTERN CAPE
PRINCE ALBERT
LADISMITH
CALITZDORP
DE RUST
DYSSELSDORP
OUDTSHOORN
UNIONDALE
HAARLEM
VANWYKSDORP
MONTAGU
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SWELLENDAM
ST. BLAIZE
RIVERSDALE
HEROLD
GEORGE
KNYSNA
PLETTENBERG BAY
MOSSEL BAY
WITSAND
STILBAAI
ARNISTON
INDIAN OCEAN

The team of GCBR interns in the Palmiet doing a vegetation assessment in an area cleared of black wattle.

Case Study:

The **Corridors Project in the Gouritz Cluster Biosphere Reserve** focuses on land rehabilitation and veld management by establishing ecological corridors across private and protected landscapes. By working closely with farmers and landowners, the project promotes sustainable land-use practices, fire management, invasive species control, and wetland restoration. Through collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and innovative restoration techniques, the project strengthens biodiversity conservation while supporting local livelihoods, ensuring long-term ecological resilience in this globally significant biodiversity hotspot.

Learn more!
Scan the QR code or visit gouritz.com/project/gouritz-ecological-corridors-project/

Baviaanskloof Mega Reserve, GCBR.
Photo © Roger de la Harpe

Economic benefits can be derived from managing the veld, especially those livelihoods that are dependent on natural resources, such as agriculture, game farming and tourism. If the natural resource is well-managed, it will be available for future generations. Economic benefits are also gained through cost saving, where the costs associated with environmental damage (remediation and restoration) are reduced.

BOOSMANSBOS
WILDERNESS
SAAGKUILSKLOOF

Boosmansbos Nature Reserve, GCBR.
Photo © Jacques Niemand

Veld management generates employment opportunities in the fields of conservation, eco-tourism and sustainable agriculture, and ensures that local communities have access to vital resources, like clean water, food and energy. Quality of life is enhanced as recreational opportunities are provided and cultural landscapes are preserved. This can lead to more effective and culturally sensitive management strategies where indigenous and local knowledge systems are supported and provide input. This in turn can strengthen the resilience of communities to environmental shocks and stresses by promoting sustainable practices and adaptive strategies.

The sustainable management of the veld has far-reaching impacts. It mitigates climate change by contributing to carbon sequestration and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The management of natural resources offers a comprehensive approach to balancing environmental health, economic prosperity and social equity. Through awareness of the interconnectedness of these elements, good veld-management helps to create a more sustainable and resilient future for all.

In summary, good veld management offers a comprehensive approach to balancing environmental health, economic prosperity and social equity. By addressing the interconnectedness of these elements, managing the veld well helps to create a more sustainable and resilient future for all.

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Game auctions a vital cog in wildlife ranching success

Riaan Nowers

Photo © MLP Media

Game auctions a vital cog in wildlife ranching success

by Riaan Nowers[1]

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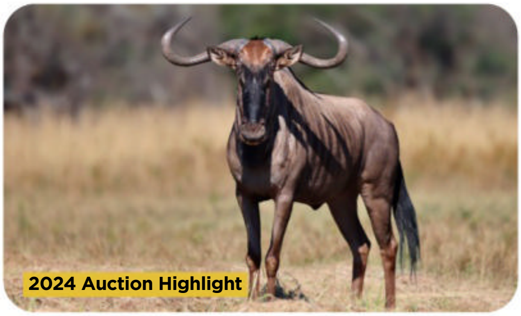
The wildlife ranching industry in South Africa has grown significantly over the past few years. This burgeoning sector is characterised by a unique blend of creativity, technical prowess and entrepreneurial spirit.

Wildlife ranching involves the breeding and management of wild animal species for conservation, tourism and commercial purposes. It differs from traditional livestock farming as it focuses on mostly indigenous wildlife species, often within large, fenced areas that mimic their natural habitats. The goal is to sustainably manage wildlife populations while generating economic benefits through tourism, hunting and the sale of live animals.

Wildlife ranching in South Africa is a significant part of the country's conservation and economic landscape with the following points highlighting its importance:

- **Conservation Success**: Wildlife ranching has played a crucial role in South Africa's conservation efforts. Private wildlife ranches cover about 17% of the land, which is more than double the area of protected national parks. These ranches help conserve various species, including iconic ones like the white rhino.
- **Economic Impact**: The wildlife ranching industry provides around 65 000 jobs, significantly more than the 4 000 permanent jobs in South African National Parks. Ranches generate revenue through activities such as ecotourism, trophy hunting, wildlife trade, and meat sales.
- **Resilience**: Wildlife ranches have shown resilience, especially during challenging times like the Covid-19 pandemic. They were more financially stable and adaptable compared to traditional protected areas.
- **Sustainable Practices**: Organisations like Wildlife Ranching South Africa (WRSA) advocate for the sustainable and responsible use of natural resources. They support wildlife ranchers through education, empowerment and promoting the green economy.



Wildebeest (*Connochaetes*).
Auction: Bona Bona Game Breeders LIVE 2024
Lot title: *36" Hunter, Blue Wildebeest Hunting bull*
Bid price: R710 000
Auction total: R25 504 500

The wildlife ranching industry is well known for its innovation and creativity. Local ranchers are not afraid to experiment with new techniques and practices, resulting in diverse and sustainable wildlife management strategies and technologies. From advanced breeding programmes to community-based conservation initiatives, the region's wildlife ranching industry continues to push the boundaries of what is possible.

In addition, various conferences, symposia and workshops facilitate fertile ground to bring together ranchers, conservationists and researchers to share ideas, showcase their work and network. These events foster a sense of camaraderie and provide valuable opportunities for collaboration.

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South Africa's wildlife ranching industry has seen a substantial increase in both scope and revenue. According to the WRSA, the industry has grown by 20% annually since 2014. This growth is attributed to a rising number of ranchers, increased investment in sustainable practices, lower traditional agricultural productivity, and a growing demand for wildlife experiences.

Despite its growth, the wildlife ranching industry faces several challenges. Limited access to funding, high operational costs, in some areas deteriorating infrastructure, and regulatory hurdles can hinder the development of new ventures. However, these challenges also present opportunities for innovation and growth.

Focusing on game auctions, the 2024 game auction season did not disappoint! The **50 978** head of game sold was the second highest in the game ranching history and resulted in a gross turnover of R623.7 million. This performance is against the record number of game auctions (166) that took place last year resulting in some 54 296 (2023) animals transacted successfully. Indeed, 2024 hosted 161 game auctions (**Table 1**), putting it again in second place when considering the number of game auctions per annum.

Taking a step back, we should reflect on the importance of the auction industry as this is not simply a single phenomenon in a value chain where buyers and sellers meet. It is much more than that:

Market Efficiency: Auctions help establish fair market prices for game species based on supply and demand at any given time. This transparency can lead to more accurate valuations of species and act as price

Table 1: Summary of game auction industry: 2020–2024

Data below focusses on actual animal (game) sales and excludes hunting, livestock and other tourism sales.

	2020	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**% Change**
Number of auctions	112	147	152	166	161	-3.0%
Gross turnover	R254,636,216	R353,301,286	R500,851,810	R648,314,475	R623,745,600	-3.8%
Total head of game sold	28,567	38,283	49,512	54,296	50,978	-6.1%
Average auction turnover	R2,273,538	R2,403,410	R3,295,078	R3,905,509	R3,874,196	-0.8%
Average auction turnover: Quarter 1	R3,302,027	R2,448,305	R3,029,833	R5,432,184	R4,214,207	
Average auction turnover: Quarter 2	R1,316,507	R2,286,830	R3,164,143	R3,344,303	R3,659,163	
Average auction turnover: Quarter 3	R2,351,865	R2,611,000	R3,766,443	R4,041,855	R4,334,866	
Average auction turnover: Quarter 4	R2,210,074	R1,716,930	R2,217,770	R1,744,941	R1,852,768	
Average number of game per auction sold	255	260	326	327	317	-3.2%
Average head of game sold: Quarter 1	283	233	315	354	288	
Average head of game sold: Quarter 2	232	300	382	350	374	
Average head of game sold: Quarter 3	253	229	282	302	278	
Average head of game sold: Quarter 4	298	300	263	250	255	
Average percentage of animals sold per auction	85.8%	89.9%	88.8%	92.0%	90.4%	
Average number of lots on offer	85	83	90	86	86	
Percentage of lots on offer sold	81.2%	87.8%	87.5%	91.1%	90.7%	
Colour variants sold as % of total	9.2%	9.9%	11.4%	12.0%	12.7%	
Average price per head sold: Quarter 1	R11,681	R10,492	R9,608	R15,337	R14,650	
Average price per head sold: Quarter 2	R5,683	R7,611	R8,288	R9,552	R9,779	
Average price per head sold: Quarter 3	R9,312	R11,383	R13,335	R13,364	R15,569	
Average price per head sold: Quarter 4	R7,478	R5,731	R8,423	R6,970	R7,258	
Analysis of *Timed* vs *Live* auctions:	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	
Share in gross turnover per year:						
- Timed auctions (%)	67.0%	38.3%	20.6%	19.4%	19.5%	
- Live auctions (%)	33.0%	61.7%	79.4%	80.6%	80.5%	
Rand/animal:						
- Timed auctions	R25,818	R24,815	R35,968	R27,365	R24,769	
- Live auctions	R8,205	R16,327	R19,381	R15,745	R17,186	
Number of animals/auction:						
- Timed auctions	219	212	143	195	195	
- Live auctions	283	286	392	361	357	

signals for both breeders and prospective breeders.

Liquidity: Auctions provide a marketplace for buyers and sellers to transact, increasing liquidity in the game industry market. This allows participants to easily buy or sell rare or valuable game species as well as plains game.

Economic Activity: Auctions stimulate economic activity by generating revenue for auction houses, increasing sales for sellers and driving purchases for buyers. This can have a ripple effect on related sectors, such as transport, insurance and advertising. A game auction within a rural area also fosters community engagement, often creating a festival atmosphere of excitement, and acts as a valuable financial injection in businesses in such areas – accommodation, catering, fuel stations and even rural airstrips. An economic study on this would highlight the multiplier effect of a game auction taking place and is surely something that could be taken up with tertiary institutions.

Accessibility: Online auctions make it easier for a broader audience to participate, democratising access to species that might otherwise be difficult to obtain. The transparent way bids are shown and shared is to be applauded.

Social and Business Aspect: Game auctions may be compared to golf courses where buyers, sellers and investors meet, talk business and socialise, which adds another layer to the economy surrounding game auctions.

2024 Auction Highlight

African buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*).
Auction: Woody Cape Wildlife LIVE 2024
Lot title: *(3-in-1) 39" Kimbi with 56 4/8" Dominus Heifer calf running with Dominus*
Bid price: R3 000 000
Auction total: R17 186 550

2024 Auction Highlight

Gemsbok (*Oryx gazella*).
Auction: Signature Wildlife LIVE 2024
Lot title: *46 3/8" Boesman, son of 46" Khamab*
Bid price: R950,000
Auction total: R13 514 500

Innovation and Trends: Auctions can reflect and influence trends in the game industry, as high-profile sales can spark interest in certain species, shaping consumer preferences and perceptions. The innovative way both timed and live auctions are managed and take place paves the way for efficient and transparent transactions, which bodes well for the game ranching industry.

Overall, game auctions contribute to a dynamic and vibrant game ranching economy, affecting everything from pricing to social appreciation.

Game auctions also play a crucial role in an industry that is well-known for its role in ecotourism and as a creator of jobs. In addition, the wildlife ranching industry strives towards sustainable and ethical practices as they are involved in conservation efforts to promote biodiversity and habitat preservation, which often includes breeding programmes for endangered species. Degraded agricultural and community land is restored to enhance the associated ecosystems in which it operates.

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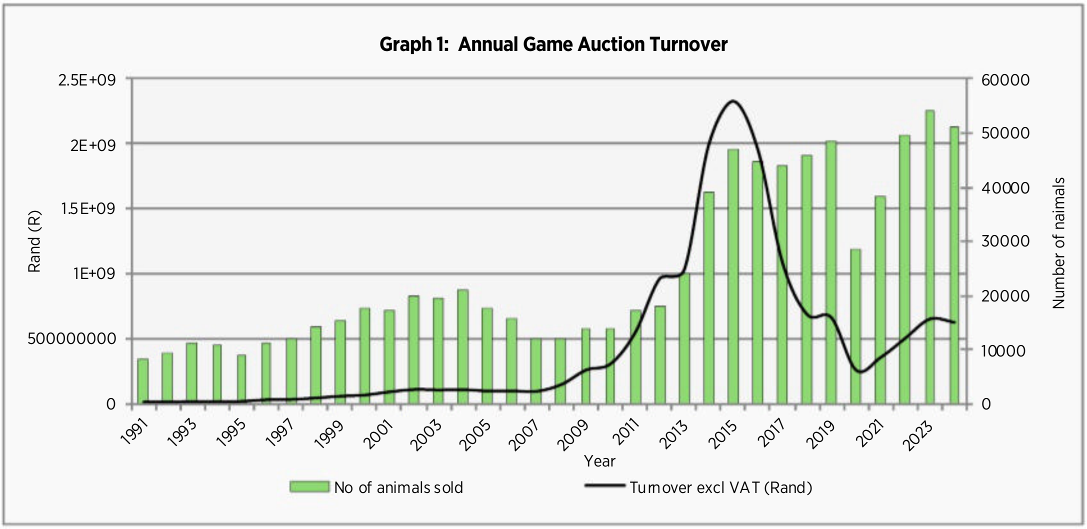
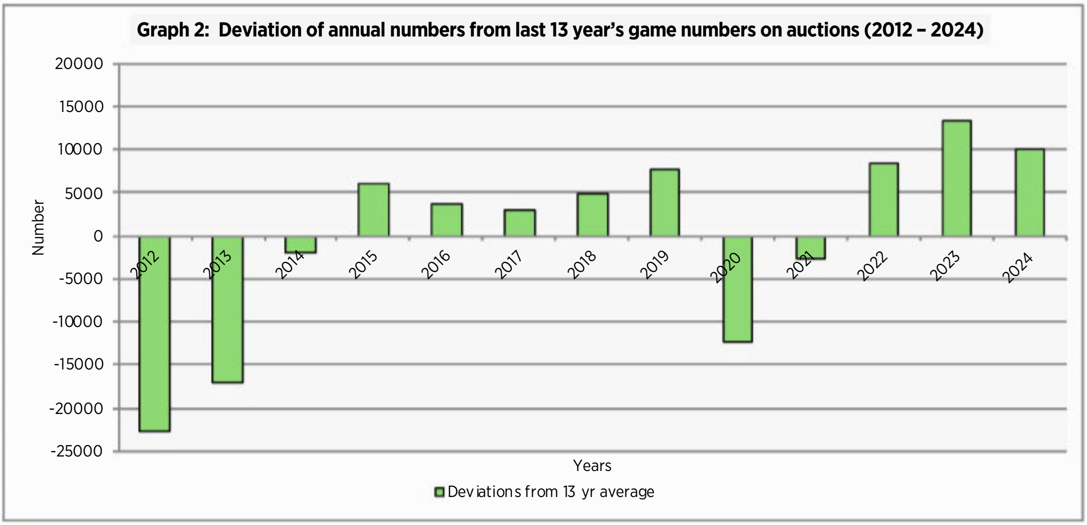
2024 Auction Highlight

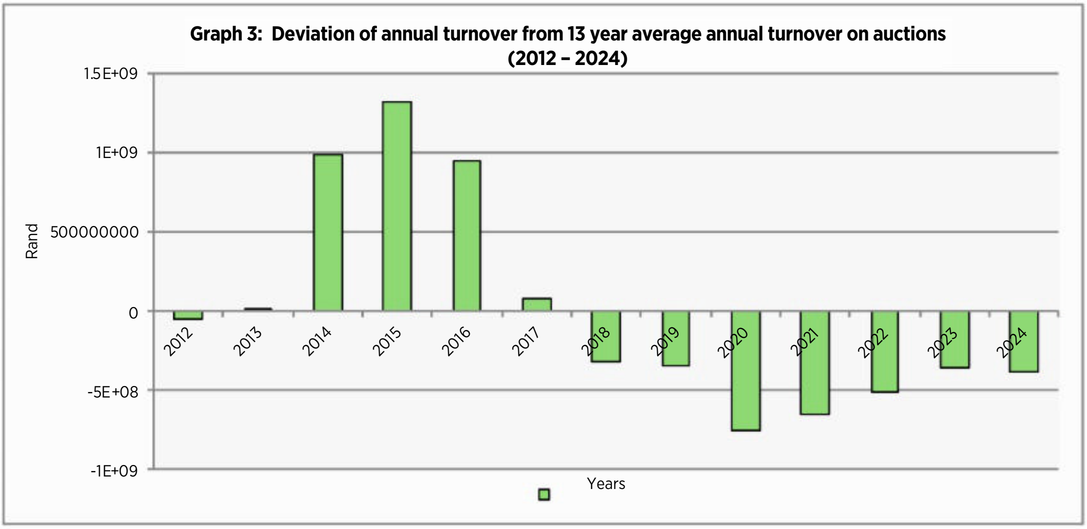
Livingstone eland (*Taurotragus oryx livingstonii*).
Auction: Wildlife Legacy LIVE 2024
Lot title: *Nirvana: 40" Livingstone Eland breeding bull (15 stripes) son of Edgar*
Bid price: R4 100 000
Auction total: R20 358 000

Back to the 2024 season. The gross income of R623.7 million is in line with that of 2023's R648,3 million and shows how the industry recovered from the Covid-19 pandemic that seriously impacted most of South Africa's sectorial economies. **Graph 1** clearly shows how the annual turnover went down during the pandemic in 2020 and how it annually showed a recovery, reaching a more stable plateau from 2023 onwards. This graph also clearly shows the "boom" period from 2014-2016 when especially extraordinary prices were paid for colour-variant animals and other sought-after species.

Graph 1 and **Graph 2** also show how the said pandemic resulted in lower numbers sold during the pandemic and how it


Graph 1: Annual Game Auction Turnover


Graph 2: Deviation of annual numbers from last 13 year's game numbers on auctions (2012 – 2024)



Graph 3: Deviation of annual turnover from 13 year average annual turnover on auctions (2012 – 2024)

increased to a record level in 2023. The deviations of the last 13 years' average make a compelling case for praising the recovery in numbers transacting from the recent low of 2020 and 2021.

Earlier, it is stated that the 2014-2016 period recorded record turnovers, which may not easily be equalled soon and this is visually shown in **Graph 3**. Again the performances against the last 13 years' averages clearly show how the game ranching industry stabilised and recovered from the previous decade's "boom" period as well as from the 2020 "bust" period.

The resilience of the game ranching industry in this should be applauded as the belief in their "product" and industry never seized or faltered.

The spread of the 2024 individual auction results revealed in **Graph 4** shows an interesting distribution with a definite bias toward the R1-3 million income, together with a strong surge during recent years from auctions between R3 million and R5 million. Incidentally, in 2023 numerous auctions showed a strong R2-3 million result, but 2024 again saw that, as in previous years, the "smaller" auctions with a turnover less than R2 million do have a role to play in spreading income and gene pools.

The breeding of colour-variant species is often a contentious point. **Graph 5** reveals

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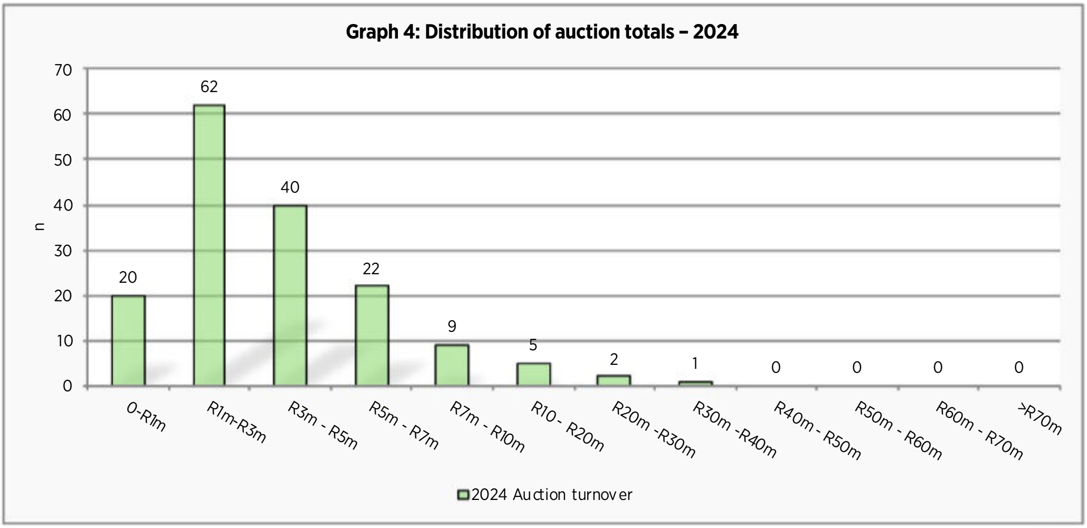
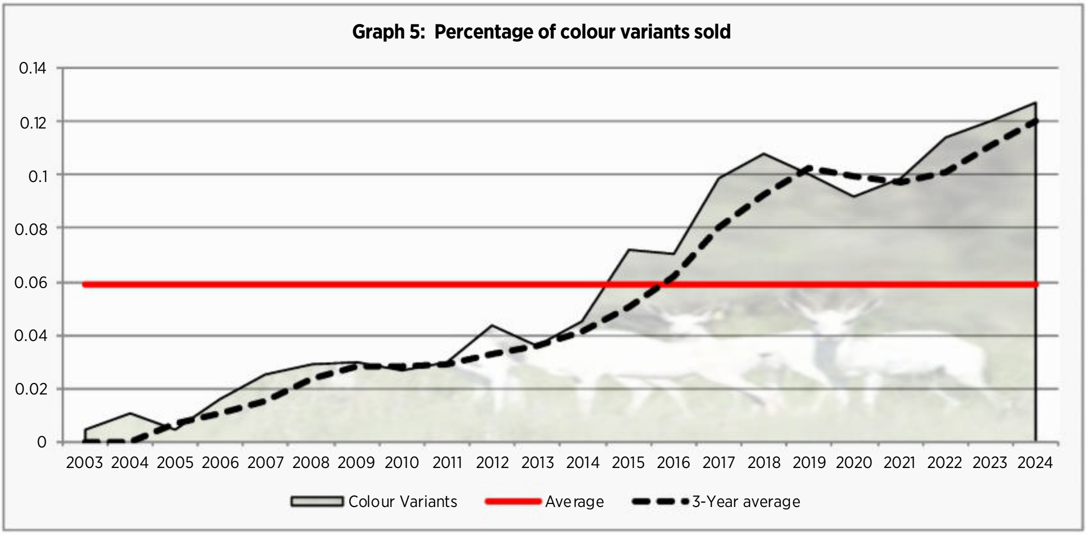
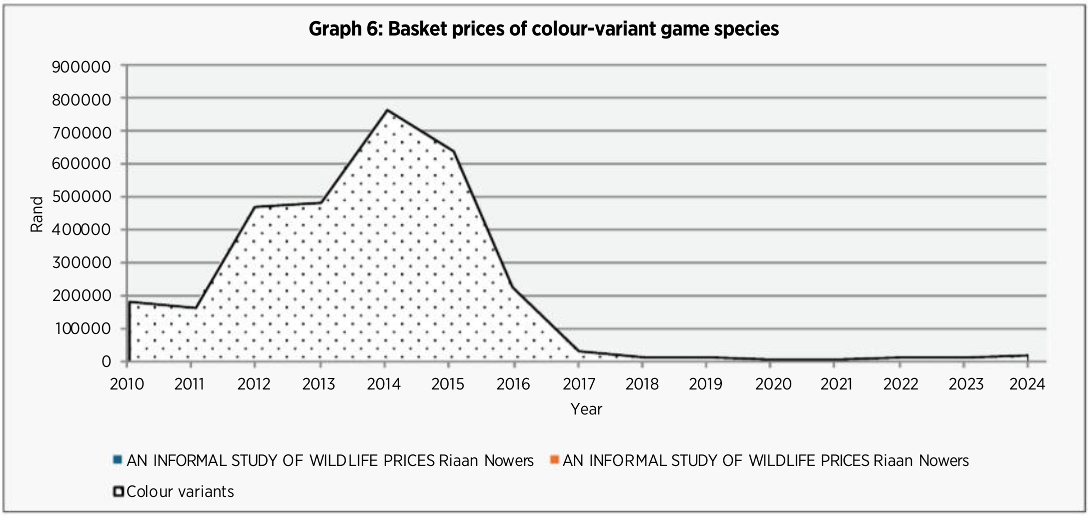


Graph 4: Distribution of auction totals – 2024



Graph 5: Percentage of colour variants sold



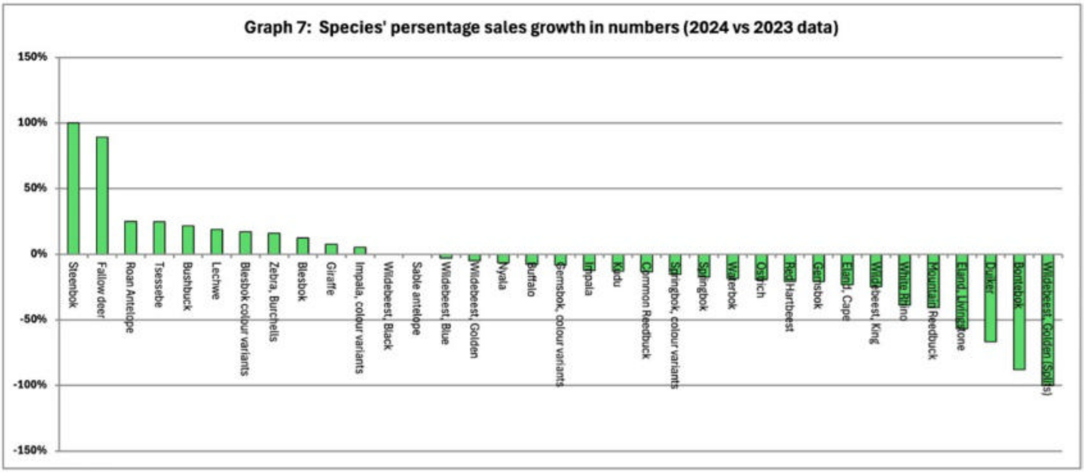
Graph 6: Basket prices of colour-variant game species

the percentage of colour-variants rose to 12.7%, which is above the informal or non-official threshold of 10% that many purists warn about.

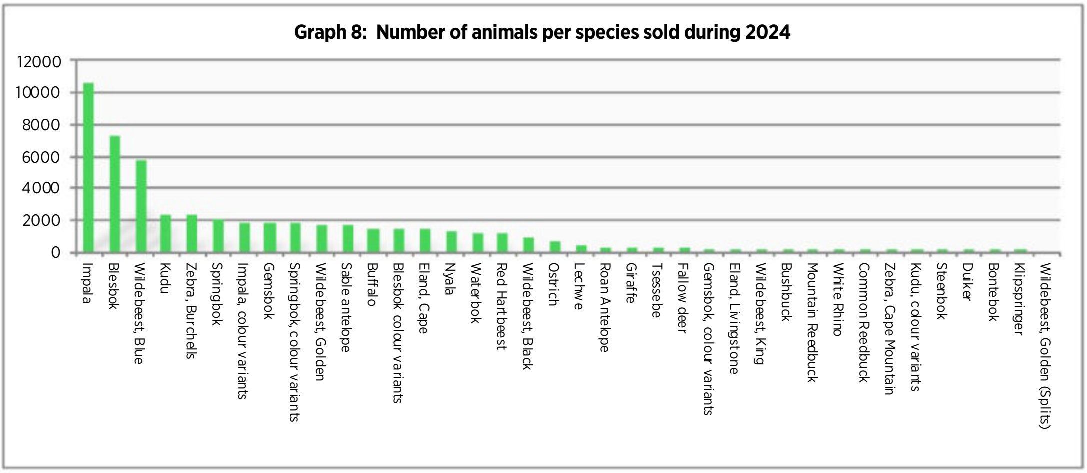
A weighted index of selected colour-variant breeds' prices (**Graph 6**) shows that after the previously identified "boom" period, prices dropped significantly as predicted to an absolute low in 2020. It is however interesting to note that this index shows an upward trend since that period, albeit very slightly – thus, auction prices of colour-variants have been increasing since 2020 and so are the annual numbers transacted on the market, indicating that there is still a dynamic market for these

2024 Auction Highlight

Sable antelope (*Hippotragus niger*).
Auction: Thaba Tholo LIVE 2024
Lot title: *56 1/8" BUZZ, Son of 52" BZN. Full brother of 61 6/8" Armstrong*
Bid price: R2 000 000
Auction total (excl. STC lots): R13 295 250



Graph 7: Species' persentage sales growth in numbers (2024 vs 2023 data)



Graph 8: Number of animals per species sold during 2024

animals and that it is indeed actually revitalising itself.

Graph 7 reveals that steenbok, fallow deer, tsessebe, roan antelope and lechwe showed a remarkable increase in sales in 2024 when compared with 2023. Steenbok however comes from a fairly low base, so this species cannot be considered in the same way as the other species. Colour variants of blesbok, Burchell's zebra and black wildebeest also showed strong growth in sales.

It is not surprising that plains game like impala, blesbok and blue wildebeest dominated sales and it was also to be expected that kudu, Burchell's zebra, springbok and oryx would be up there with higher numbers transacted (see **Graph 8**).

Male animals of sable antelope, saddle-back impala, roan antelope, tsessebe and oryx showed healthy price increases during 2024. The range of price changes is demonstrated in **Graph 9** but this is restricted to that of male animals.

Given the fact that wildlife ranchers in many ways farm with genes, the question can be asked what the price movements of species are? A detailed database exists that annually captures these results per species category, that is the number of animals transacted, the average and weighted prices, and the highest prices achieved.

Graph 10 provides deeper insight into the time movement of the highest prices achieved and again indicates the "boom" years during 2014-2016. It also shows the slump in prices during the Covid-19 year of 2020 and how the highest or record prices started to recover after that. Thus, the last two years showed a remarkable recovery

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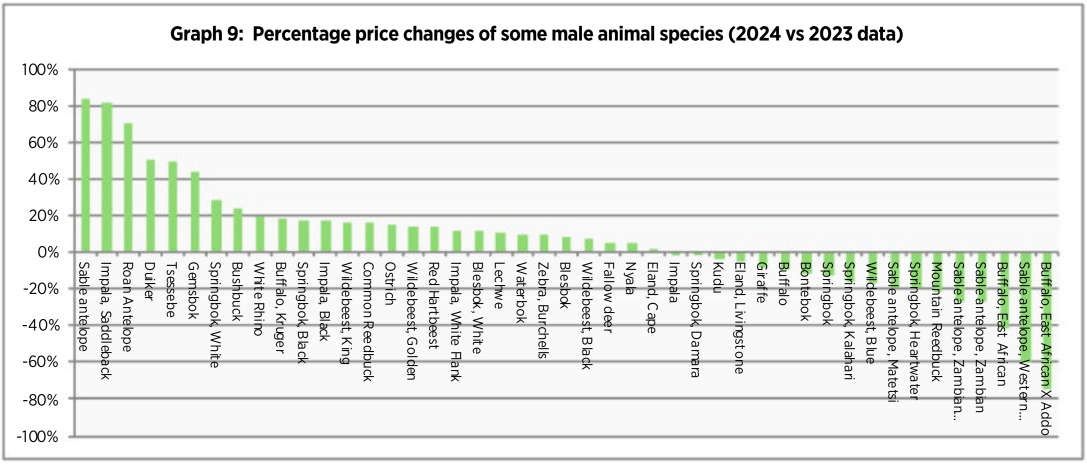
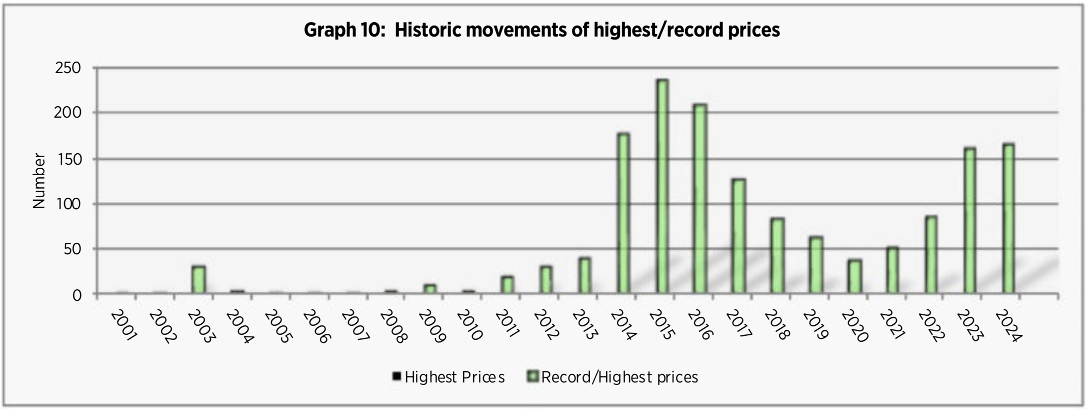


Graph 9: Percentage price changes of some male animal species (2024 vs 2023 data)



Graph 10: Historic movements of highest/record prices

in the highest or record prices that species achieved.

In summary, the game ranching industry represents a unique blend of agriculture, conservation and tourism, contributing to economic development, the revitalisation of rural areas and environmental stewardship in South Africa. With this being said, it remains important that the whole value chain within this sector receives the necessary recognition and in this, the role of game auctions is central in the sharing and spreading of species' genes to remain competitive and sustainable.

Learn more!
Scan the QR code or visit: shorturl.at/aGZpD to download **Table 1: Summary of game auction industry – 2020-2024**

The year 2025 promises to maintain and even accelerate the impetus generated by the last few years since the pandemic. There is no doubt that with the vision, dedication and use of cutting-edge technologies that exist within the game ranching sector, the valued financial and socio-economic upward trajectory will be maintained. As South African wildlife ranchers continue to make their mark on the global stage, the future of the wildlife ranching industry in this region looks incredibly promising. **AP**

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RABIES IN SEALS

Five Frequently Asked Questions

Several Cape fur seals (*Arctocephalus pusillus*) have tested positive for rabies in the Western Cape in June 2024. While this is an emerging situation, we wish to share a selection of answers to five frequently asked questions.

1 *How was the seal rabies discovered?*
In May 2024, a dog with rabies was reported to the state veterinarian in Cape Town. The owner suspected it had been bitten by a seal, so samples were taken from aggressive seals reported in that week and sent for rabies testing. When they tested positive, this triggered the testing of seal samples that had been taken and stored by Sea Search, an independent research organisation since 2022.

2 *How long have seals had rabies?*
The earliest positive case that has been identified so far was in August 2022 in Cape Town. It is likely that the outbreak started before this.

3 *How did seals get rabies?*
Preliminary virus sequencing results show the seal rabies viruses are most closely related to rabies viruses from other wildlife species in Southern Africa. It therefore seems most likely that the outbreak started with a seal that was bitten by another rabid wild animal, such as a jackal, on the coast.

4 *What should I do if I am attacked by a seal?*
Get to safety as quickly as possible. If you have a wound or scratch, wash it very thoroughly with soap and water. Then go to your nearest clinic or doctor immediately and tell them you suspect you have been in contact with a rabid animal.

5 *How can I protect myself and my community from rabies?*
If you suspect an animal has rabies, report it immediately to your local state veterinarian so that it can be responded to quickly.

Make sure all your dogs and cats are vaccinated against rabies and their vaccinations are kept up to date. This is required by South African law.

Those working with seals on a frequent basis are advised to consult their health care practitioner about receiving pre-exposure rabies vaccinations.

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